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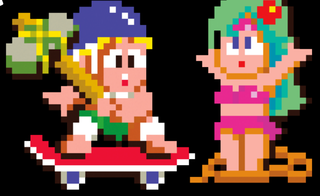

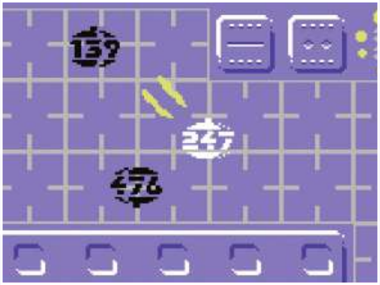

ULTIMATE GUIDE: PARADROID

ANDREW BRAYBROOK REVISITS HIS LEGENDARY ACTION GAME

CD-ROM: THE EARLY YEARS

HOW THE COMPACT DISC HELPED TO KICK-START A NEW GENERATION

THE HISTORY OF WONDER BOY

RYUICHI NISHIZAWA ON THE GAMES THAT SHAPED SEGA'S LOVABLE CAVEMAN

TOP 25 LIGHTGUN GAMES

BRAND-NEW RETRO SYSTEMS

FIRST LOOK AT THE EVERCADE EXP AND MEGA DRIVE MINI 2

PLUS

- THE LEGEND OF KAGE
- **PLAYSTATION DUALSHOCK**
- TOTAL ECLIPSE
- **ANDREW SLEIGH**
- TEMPEST 4000
- **THE SALES CURVE**
- HOMEBREW
- **WII**

DONKEY KONG LAND

PAUL MACHACEK ON CREATING A GAME BOY SEQUEL FOR A SNES SMASH

THE MAKING OF KICK OFF 2

DINO DINI ON THE CREATION OF THE CULT FAVOURITE SEQUEL

D&D: WARRIORS OF THE ETERNAL SUN

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FUTURE

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE WONDER BOY GAME?

DARRAN JONES

Once upon a time it would have been *The Dragon's Trap*, but *Monster Boy And The Cursed Kingdom* is a killer update that I absolutely love
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!
Currently playing: *Trauma Center: Second Opinion*
Favourite game of all time: *Strider*

TIM EMPEY

I've definitely played *Wonder Boy*, I just can't remember where. It was either after swimming lessons, or Barry's Amusements in Portrush. I was bad at it.
Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they leave the service
Currently playing: *Anvil: Vault Breakers*
Favourite game of all time: *God Hand*

NICK THORPE

Common answer, but it's *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*. I've only loved a few games so much that I took them on holiday with me, and this is one of them.
Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III
Currently playing: *Final Vendetta*
Favourite game of all time: *Sonic The Hedgehog*

ANDY SALTER

What's the *Wonder Boy* where you team up with Young Nastyman to slay the final boss hydra?
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently playing: *Total War: Rome Remastered…* Modded of course
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War*

PAUL DRURY

Monster World IV, with its fancy swords-womanship and peak Nineties pixel art. I'm playing it at the moment and am brimful of Asha. [Groan – Ed]
Expertise: Old arcade games based on public nudity
Currently playing: *Monster World IV* (told you)
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*

PAUL ROSE

Got to go really old-school and say the original in the arcades. It just stood out. Bags of character too.
Expertise: Winging it
Currently playing: *Wonder Boy*, now that you've reminded me.
Favourite game of all time: *Half-Life 2*

ANDREW FISHER

Wonder Boy III: Monster Lair – loved it from the moment I saw it, stylish graphics and great shoot-'em-up sections.
Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch
Currently playing: *BAT*
Favourite game of all time: *Wizball*

RORY MILNE

I have a soft spot for the Sega Master System *Wonder Boy* – purely for nostalgic reasons. It may not be arcade perfect, but it felt like it at the time.
Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing
Currently playing: *Elite*
Favourite game of all time: *Tempest*

MARTYN CARROLL

The first one, in the arcades. Specifically seeing how long I could keep hold of the skateboard you get at the beginning of the game (round 2 if I was lucky).
Expertise: Sinclair stuff
Currently playing: *Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D*
Favourite game of all time: *Jet Set Willy*

LOADING...

Amazingly, I can still remember the first time I encountered *Wonder Boy*. I was on a school trip to France and *Wonder Boy* was one of a handful of arcade games that were on the ferry as we made our crossing. That fun encounter led to me picking up the Amstrad conversion, but the less said about that the better.

Sega's franchise really came to my attention once I purchased a Master System and I enjoyed both *Monster Land* and *The Dragon's Trap*, arguably one of the best Master System games of all time.

It's a real pleasure then to not only talk to creator Ryuichi Nishizawa about those three early games, but also the likes of *Monster Lair* (which I played in a local pub) *Wonder Boy In Monster World* (which came free with a Game Gear and Master System adaptor I bought) and *Monster Boy And The Cursed Kingdom* (which I reviewed for this very mag). It's a fantastic, interesting and often convoluted series, and it's great to see its revival in recent years.

Other highlights of this issue include Making Of articles on *Donkey Kong Land*, *Kick Off 2* and *D&D: Warriors Of The Eternal Sun*, how The Sales Curve got started and a chat with Andrew Braybrook about the excellent *Paradroid*. We've got something for everyone, including a great subs offer on page 30.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

retro GAMER
WONDER BOY
THE HISTORY OF
retro GAMER

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Everyone covets games and Mr Biffo is no exception. But what game was it?

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SHLI AND CHRISTOPHER ARE
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Have you ever taken part in a ladder fight in a *WWF* game? Nick has

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Forget those *Batman* and *Spider-Man* games, Darran would like to make a case for this entertaining adventure

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We take a brief look at the Nintendo console we once heard described as "two GameCubes Sellotaped together"

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He was only at Ocean Software for four short years, but it left quite the impression on Andrew

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The History Of: Wonder Boy

Few franchises are as convoluted as the *Wonder Boy* series. Worry not, though, for *Wonder Boy* creator Ryuichi Nishizawa is here to guide you

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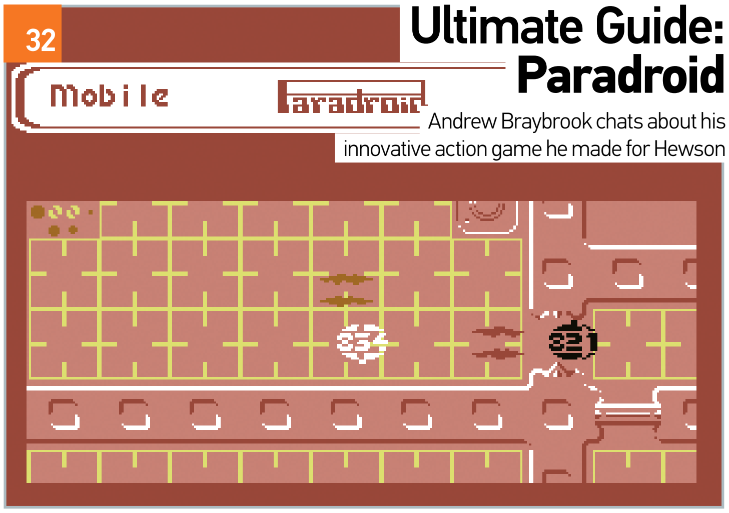
Ultimate Guide: Paradroid

Andrew Braybrook chats about his innovative action game he made for Hewson



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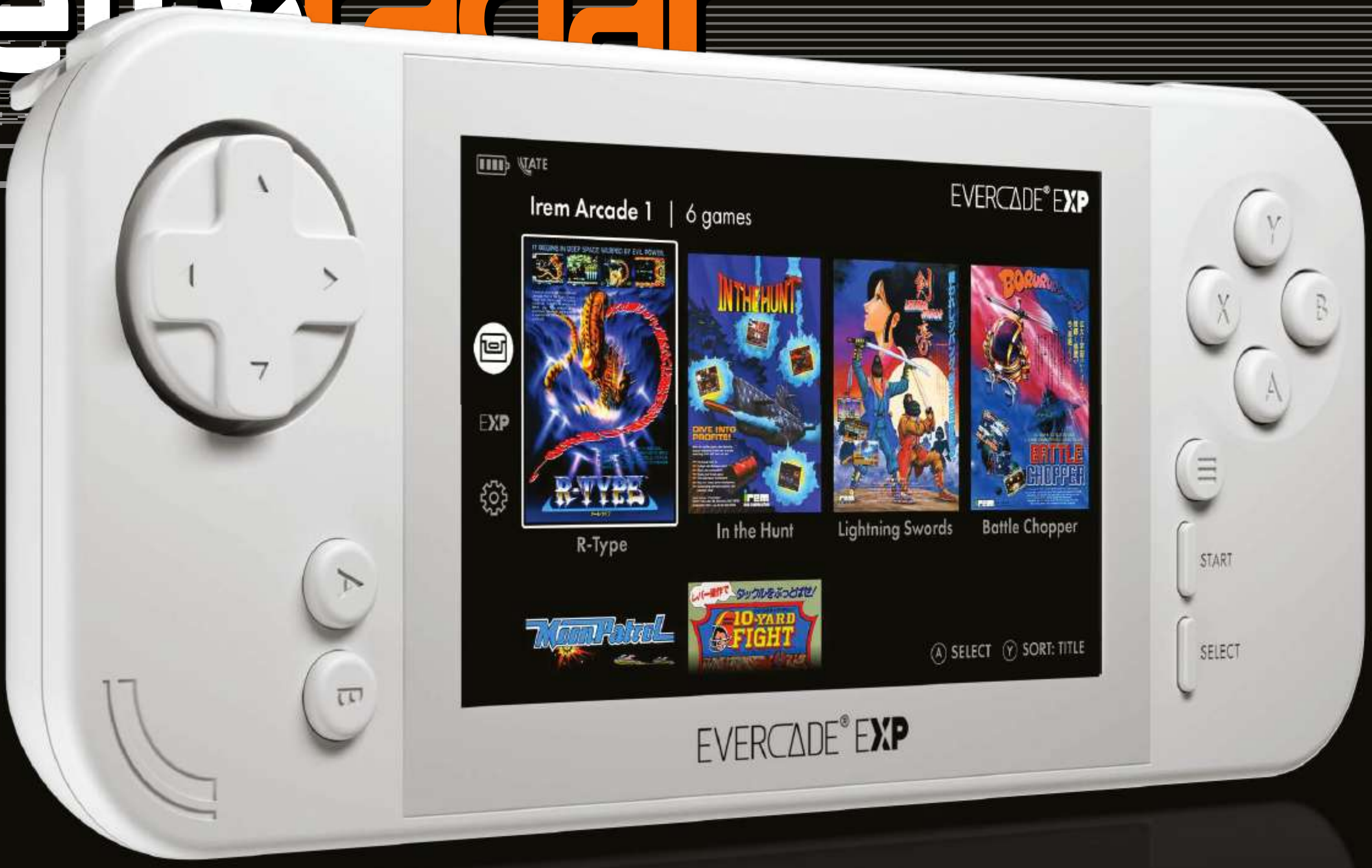
The Making Of: Donkey Kong Land

Paul Machacek on the daunting task of squeezing a SNES epic into the less impressive Game Boy



» There are only six games on the incoming Irem collection but they're absolute bangers.

THE EVERCADE EXPANDS

Blaze reveals new games and a brand-new handheld in its Evercade range

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Find out what happened when Nick travelled all the way back to October 2005

ENERGY
MONEY

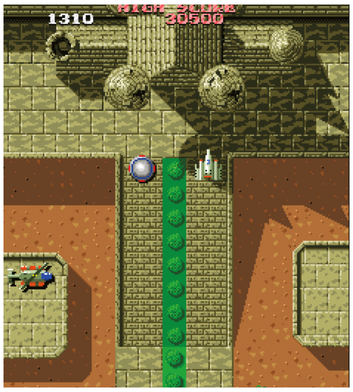
As everyone was preparing to celebrate the Queen's jubilee, Blaze had its own plans. It used the two-year anniversary of its original Evercade to reveal two new game packs (Irem and Toaplan) as well as a brand-new handheld, the Evercade EXP. The Evercade EXP (priced at £129.99) will not only greatly improve on the original handheld, which will now be discontinued, but will also give owners the ability to play certain games in TATE mode.

While a few handheld owners are disappointed that their system will soon be obsolete, Andrew Byatt, Blaze's managing director, assures us the original Evercade won't be forgotten. "In terms of long-term support, the original handheld will get one more quality-of-life firmware upgrade in 2022, and from then onwards we will only look to update it if we encounter any major bugs," he says. "There will still be long-term customer support for this product and to be clear, all cartridges, both current and future, will be playable on the original device with that final firmware release. Older firmwares will not have guaranteed or tested compatibility."

Blaze's focus now appears to be on the sleek-looking Evercade EXP and it's clearly resonating with fans as the recently unveiled black limited-edition version has already sold out. In addition to its new TATE mode, the Evercade EXP will be fully compatible with all previous cartridges, including the two Namco carts, and will have an upgraded IPS screen and built-in Wi-Fi. It's also more powerful than the existing hardware. "The Evercade EXP addresses much of the feedback we had on the original hardware, as we'd already addressed firmware-related issues with software updates," says Andrew. "Updates themselves are easier than ever with the addition of built-in WiFi. We have an 800x480 IPS screen, which improves viewing quality and angles. The board and CPU bring this up to spec with the Evercade VS so we have parity across our entire ecosystem for performance."

The Evercade EXP is due to launch at the end of the year, and while previous systems and carts have had COVID-related shipping

» Blaze's Andrew Byatt has big plans for the future of the Evercade brand.



» [Evercade] The eight games on *Toaplan Arcade 1* include *Snow Bros*, *Alcon* (above) and *Tiger-Heli*.

07
EVERCADE
irem
ARCADE 1
IREM ARCADE 1
MULTI-GAME CARTRIDGE

» Andrew tells us that, *"R-Type* is a very big get for us and I hope it shows that we are attracting big names that we're able to bring to Evercade."

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CREDIT 05

» Andrew was keen to point out the value of the new carts, revealing some games like *In The Hunt* are "difficult to own physically now due to their home console cost".

issues, Andrew is confident the Evercade EXP won't suffer in the same way. "From the production point of view, we're very confident as production will be complete before the console is available to preorder in September," he says. "If all is well then there would be very little issue in hitting that date. Logistically, we are taking the lessons we learned from the release of the Evercade VS and the vast issues we encountered with the global shipping crisis and the knock on effect of that, alongside the pandemic, worker shortages and backlogged ports. We'll release a more definitive date in September, ready for preorder."

In addition to the announcement of new Irem and Toaplan carts, Blaze has also revealed to us that Commodore 64-based carts are on the way. "It's been a very long road as the demand for home computers on Evercade has been there since we started. However it's difficult to realise this when you account for the BIOSes, emulation rights and also game rights," explains Andrew. "We've found a good solution in partnering with Retro Games LTD in bringing a collection based on The C64 computer reproductions. These are great games that many know and love, and our plan is to have multiple cartridges from them, and also other home computer publishers in future."

One of the biggest complaints we saw for the Oliver Twins, Codemasters and Bitmap Brothers collections was that no Amiga or Spectrum versions were featured on their respective carts, but Andrew says this has the potential to change going forward as well when we asked about the potential of an Amiga-based Evercade cart in the future. "It's possible and not just with the Amiga, but also ZX Spectrum, MSX and more," he tells us. "Existing Evercade releases with Amiga ports would need to be licensed separately and we're trying not to re-release the same games multiple times."

As exciting as these changes to the Evercade brand sounds, Andrew remains adamant that the addition of bringing home computers to the systems won't hinder the ethos behind its popular retro-fuelled hardware. "Whatever we choose will have to work using Evercade's control interface across all devices," he says. "We want to limit confusing control schemes, virtual keyboards and the need for peripherals to make things as playable out of the box as they can be. Much like we've done for Intellivision games."

We'll have more information about the Evercade EXP, including its promised 'bonus content' which was mentioned during its launch video, in a later issue, but it's currently shaping up to be a very interesting addition to the Evercade family. *

> "The Evercade EXP addresses much of the feedback we had on the original hardware"
> **ANDREW BYATT**

START
SELECT
EVERCADE EXP

» In addition to *R-Type*, Andrew says Blaze's new Irem collection offers "great variety with *Battle Chopper* and *Lightning Swords*".

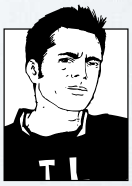
MEGA DRIVE MINI 2 ANNOUNCED

Like Blaze, Sega also has new hardware on the way, having just announced the Mega Drive Mini 2. While Sega is still keeping plenty of information about the new system under wraps ahead of its Japanese launch, we do know that it's once again being developed by M2 and that it will feature an impressive 50 games. So far, only 11 have been announced, including *Bonanza Bros, Fantasy Zone, Magical Taruruto, Shining In The Darkness, Thunder Force IV* and *Virtua Racing* for Mega Drive and *Mansion Of Hidden Souls, Popful Mail, Shining Force CD, Silpheed* and *Sonic CD* for Mega-CD.

The *Fantasy Zone* game is particularly interesting as it's a new Mega Drive port. The Mega Drive Mini featured an excellent new port of *Darius*, so we're hoping this follows suit. The inclusion of Mega-CD games is particularly pleasing as the console is definitely becoming extremely prohibitive to collect for nowadays, so anything that makes its library more accessible is definitely a good thing in our books. Here's hoping fan favourites like *Night Trap, Final Fight CD* and *Snatcher* make the cut as well. There's no news on a European release date yet, but we're confident we'll hear more soon.

Who is Iain Lee?
Iain Lee is a freelance broadcaster who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. Join him as he hosts a phone-in show and plays games at www.twitch.tv/iainlee and also check out www.patreon.com/iainandKatherine

Don't look him in the eyes



Have you ever seen one of those big Japanese meetings in a film? You know the kind where there's dozens of people in an office and loads of bowing? I've been in one of those meetings and it was the weirdest experience.

When I was filming *Thumb Candy*, a delightful documentary about videogames – it's on YouTube if you fancy it, we were lucky enough to get an interview with Toru Iwatani, the guy that made *Pac-Man*. However, to secure the interview, we had to prove that we were good enough to do it and that our intent was pure, hence the meeting.

There were easily 15 people in the room, not including me, director James Bobin and the production assistant Simon Wilson. If you want a giggle, check them out on IMDB, now very influential people in TV and Hollywood. I'm sitting in Costa writing this. Make of that what you will.

Everyone, except for us, were in business suits. About half the people were standing, the others sat around a huge table. At the head of the table was the actual boss of Namco. This was a great honour for him to attend a meeting like that and we were instructed by our Japanese fixer to not look him in the eye and never to address him unless he spoke to us first.

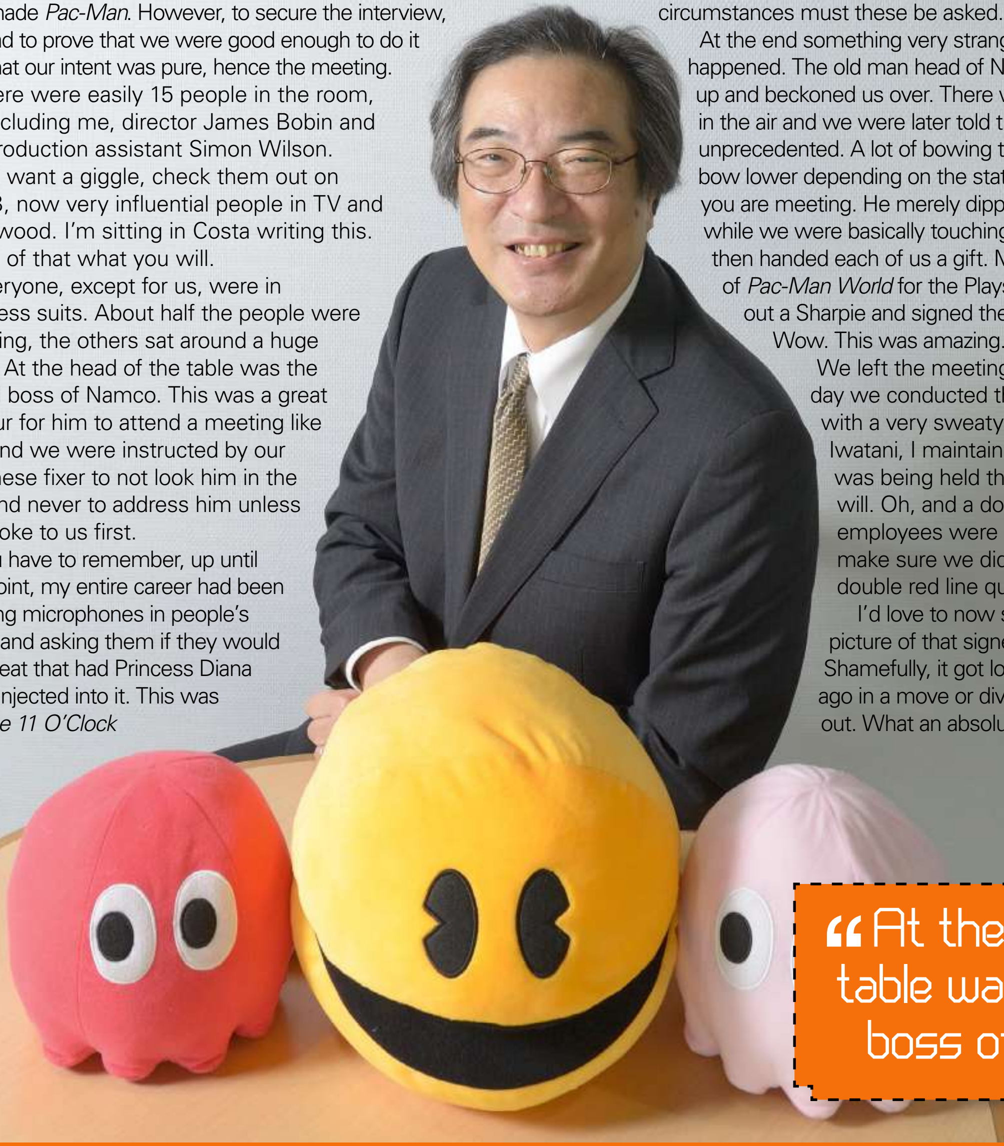
You have to remember, up until this point, my entire career had been shoving microphones in people's faces and asking them if they would eat meat that had Princess Diana DNA injected into it. This was for *The 11 O'Clock Show*, not some random consumer survey. Entering this world was light years from anything I had experienced before or since.

Nearly all of the meeting was conducted in Japanese and I have absolutely no clue what was going on. Obviously some of it was translated by our fixer, but really we had very little input. I seem to remember we had to submit all of our questions beforehand and they were handed back during this summit with a few changes and a couple of potential questions had double red lines through them meaning under no circumstances must these be asked.

At the end something very strange and wonderful happened. The old man head of Namco stood up and beckoned us over. There was tension in the air and we were later told this was most unprecedented. A lot of bowing took place, you bow lower depending on the status of the person you are meeting. He merely dipped his head while we were basically touching our toes. He then handed each of us a gift. Mine was a copy of *Pac-Man World* for the Playstation. He took out a Sharpie and signed the box for me. Wow. This was amazing. Actual treasure.

We left the meeting and the next day we conducted the interview with a very sweaty and nervous Iwatani, I maintain to this day he was being held there against his will. Oh, and a dozen Namco employees were watching to make sure we didn't ask the double red line questions.

I'd love to now show you a picture of that signed game. Shamefully, it got lost many years ago in a move or divorce or a clear out. What an absolute tool I am. ★



> "At the head of the table was the actual boss of Namco"

Do you agree with Iain's thoughts? Contact us at:

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Who is Paul Rose?
Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

Undimmed potential

In the mid-Eighties, there was one game I coveted above all others. The one that got away. My Moby-Dick, if you'll excuse the expression. You'd be forgiven for not remembering this particular game – by all accounts, it received only a limited release – but you may remember that, years before *Samba De Amigo*, *Donkey Konga*, or *Guitar Hero*, it came bundled with its own unique controller. I'm talking about *SurfChamp*.

The original home-computer era wasn't a big time for weird and wacky add-ons. The Nineties were the golden age for that spirit of wanton madness, when you could bulk out your Game Boy with so many extra bits of hardware that it ceased to be portable.

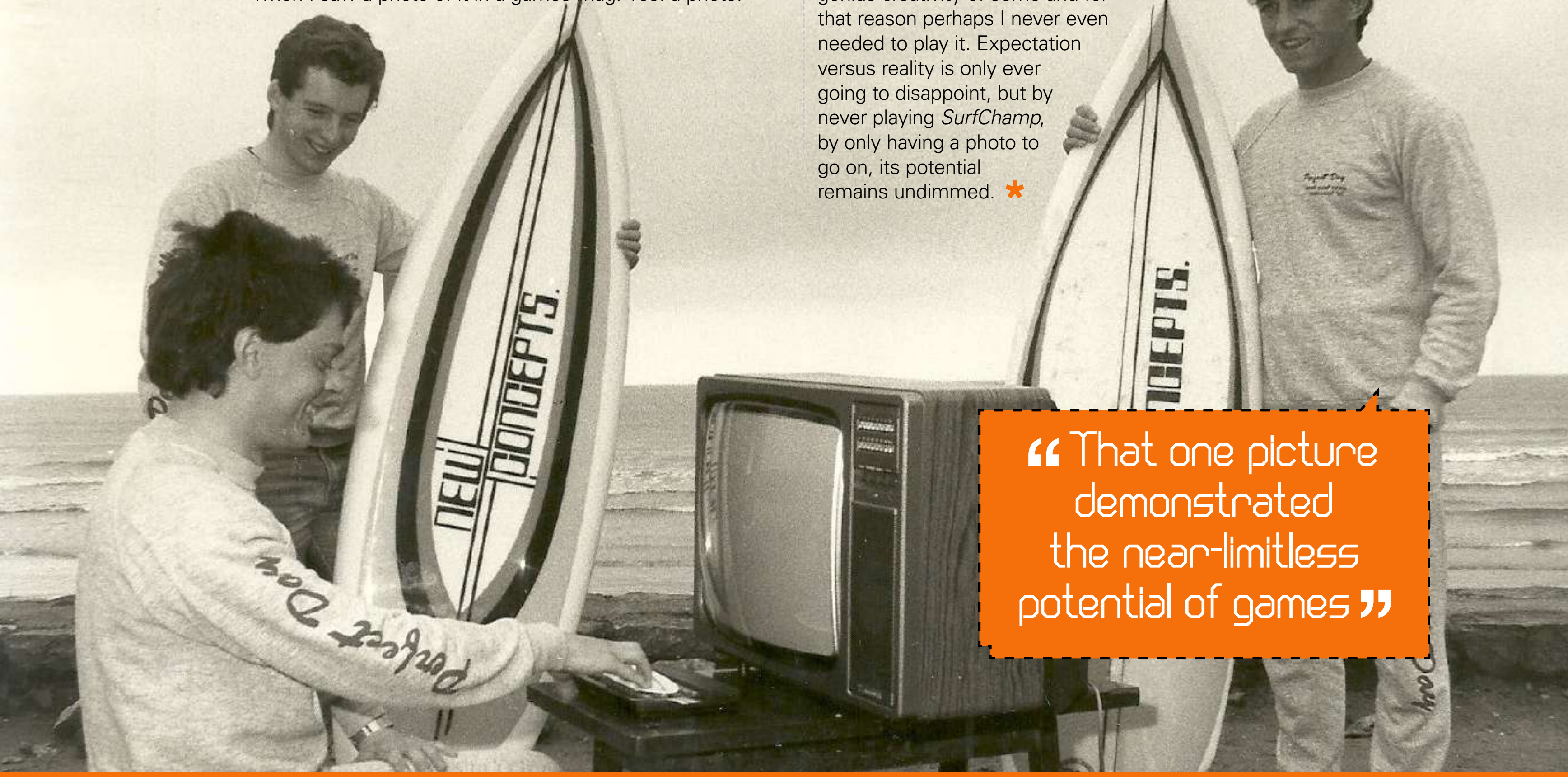
For the Spectrum… beyond some cheap and cheerful joysticks from the likes of Kempston and Fuller, the thermal printer (yes, you too can have your text burned into a roll of silver toilet paper), and the RAM pack that upgraded your humble 16K Speccy to a 48K one… there wasn't much else to get excited about. You could, I suppose, ask for a new tape deck for Christmas – and some of those came with bells and whistles – but they weren't always designed specifically for the Spectrum.

And this is why, I suspect, *SurfChamp* jumped out at me when I saw a photo of it in a games mag. Yes: a photo. Not a screenshot, but a black-and-white photograph of the unique peripheral that came with it. The name might've given it away, but *SurfChamp* was packaged with its own pogo stick! Joke. It was a surfboard that rested on the Spectrum keyboard, wobbling atop a central peg that fitted over one of the keys. To play the game you turned your hand into a surfer. It was a similar idea to those miniature toy skateboards that I've never remotely understood.

SurfChamp went even further than that though: it claimed that it could actually teach you to surf. Which it might've done had it not been the victim of a botched launch which saw only 3,000 copies make it to market. It was later released on the C64, where it sold a pitiful 600 copies.

This, in part, explains why I never got to play *SurfChamp*. I never even saw it for sale. I do recall reading a review of it in – I think – *Crash* magazine, which wasn't entirely complimentary. I remember them criticising complicated instructions, which may have dampened my ardour a little.

But still… I've never forgotten *SurfChamp*, particularly after reading about its creation in issue 211. In its own way, it had as strong an effect on me as *Knight Lore* did when I first saw screenshots of that. That one picture demonstrated the near-limitless potential of games, the genius creativity of some and for that reason perhaps I never even needed to play it. Expectation versus reality is only ever going to disappoint, but by never playing *SurfChamp*, by only having a photo to go on, its potential remains undimmed. *



> "That one picture demonstrated the near-limitless potential of games"

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

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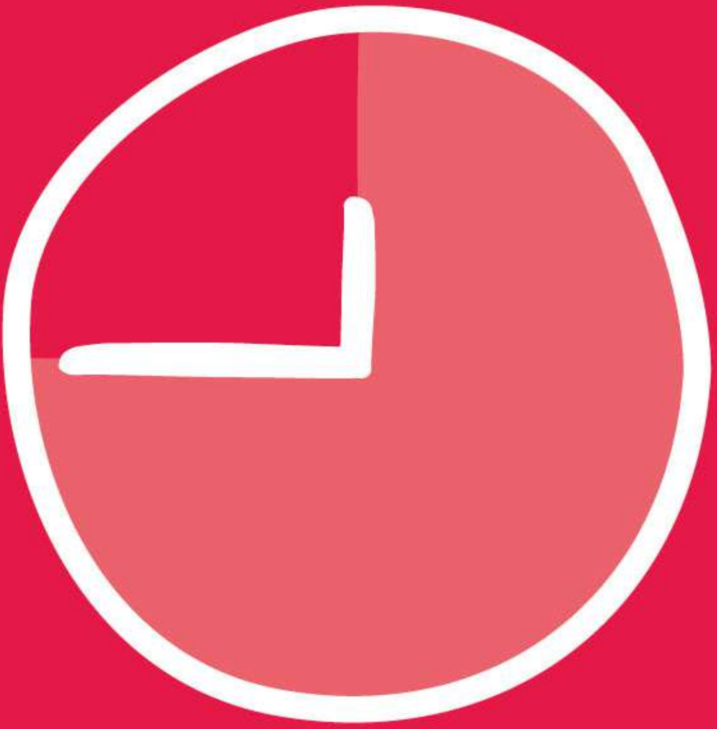

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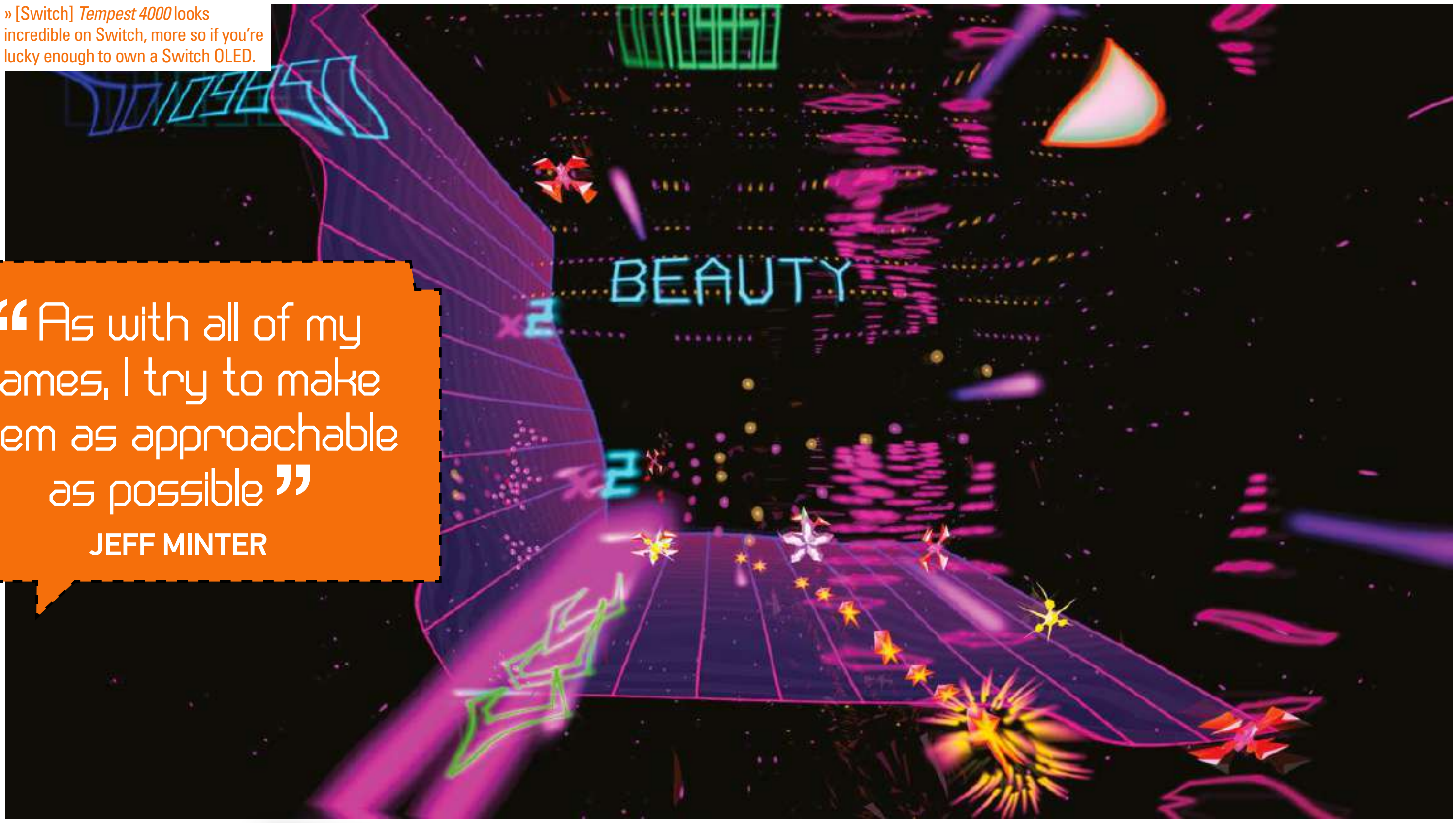
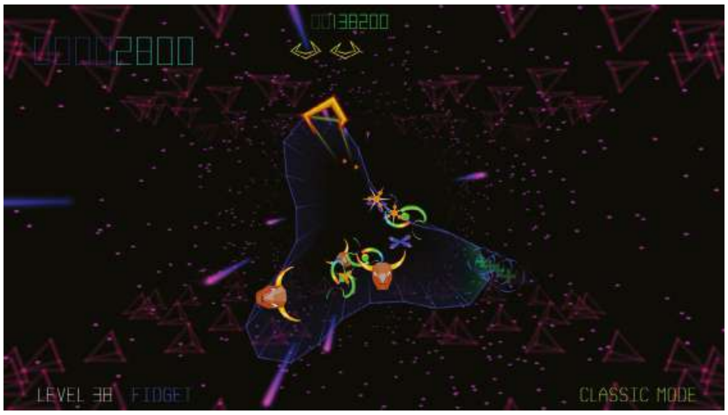


» [Switch] *Tempest 4000* looks incredible on Switch, more so if you're lucky enough to own a Switch OLED.

> "As with all of my games, I try to make them as approachable as possible"
> **JEFF MINTER**

» [Left] Jeff relaxing with one of his favourite sheep after a hard day coding. [Right] Ivan 'Giles' Zorzin is Llamasoft's technical director and has worked alongside Jeff on numerous projects.



» [Switch] It wouldn't be a Llamasoft game without some familiar-looking animals in it.

Llamasoft

Jeff Minter and Ivan 'Giles' Zorzin on porting Tempest 4000 to Switch

Jeff Minter and Ivan Zorzin have been perfecting the *Tempest* formula for years. Collectively known as Llamasoft, the pair have recently ported *Tempest 4000* to Switch, so it felt like the perfect time to ask them more about the new port and the shoot-'em-up genre in general.

What attracted you to porting *Tempest 4000* to Switch?

Jeff: We thought *Tempest 4000* would fit well gameplay-wise and look nice on the screen of the Switch, particularly the new OLED version. The game's not excessively technically demanding, and the Switch Joy-Con controllers were perfect for the gameplay, making it an all-around great choice for us. And it's always exciting to bring one of our games to a broader audience – like the Nintendo community.

Tempest 4000 reminds us of the brilliant *TxK*. How have you improved on the Vita classic?

Jeff: We extended the gameplay in certain areas with some new enemy types and extra power-up abilities like the 'Beauty mode' that grants you a short period of invincibility during which you can smash through enemies with impunity (almost like 'Bulling mode' in *Space Giraffe*). All the enemy models were also revamped from *TxK*, making them more properly polygonal 3D models, rather than mostly flat as they were in *TxK*.

What technical challenges have you faced porting *Tempest 4000* to Switch?

Ivan: This being our first Switch project, we had to port the whole of our own game engine and framework, plus the challenge of navigating the process of Nintendo certification. Most of the technical

» [Switch] Part of *Tempest 4000*'s charm is its superb soundtrack that has been tweaked over the past three decades.

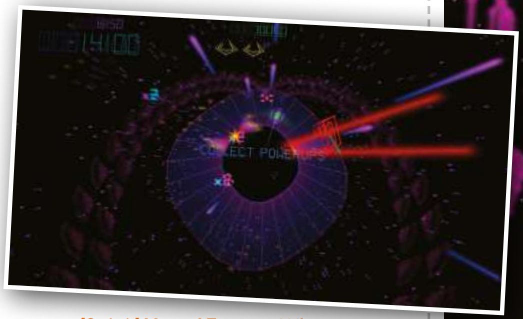
challenges revolved around the soundtrack, where we had to load each track in at a time due to the sheer number of tracks and their quality. Sometimes, the loading process became such a bottleneck that we had to invent some of our own methods that wound up working well for us.

How long has *Tempest 4000*'s soundtrack taken to craft?

Jeff: Well, technically speaking, you might say over 30 years, as some of it comes from the original *Tempest 2000* game, including some mod-format tunes that actually got left out of the original game's cartridge due to memory constraints. We also include the CD version of the *Tempest 2000* soundtracks, plus the tracks created by the Llamasoft Moosicians [more at Polybius-ost.bandcamp.com] for *TxK* as selectable alternatives to the original *T2K* tunes.

How important are online leaderboards, and are they difficult to implement?

Ivan: For some players, their scores or leaderboard placement are the main focus with arcade-style games, so I would dare to say *pretty important*. I think, for most, aside from playing the game, watching their leaderboard rank rise and fall is all part of the experience, which is why leaderboards are so vital for this type of game. Implementation can be a challenge, but it's rarely the largest challenge of the project. That said, testing and debugging make up the core time required to roll out the feature, but in the end, it's very much worth it.



» [Switch] Many of *Tempest 4000*'s power-ups will feel instantly familiar if you've played earlier Llamasoft games.

What are the disciplines you consider when making a twitch shooter like *Tempest 4000*?

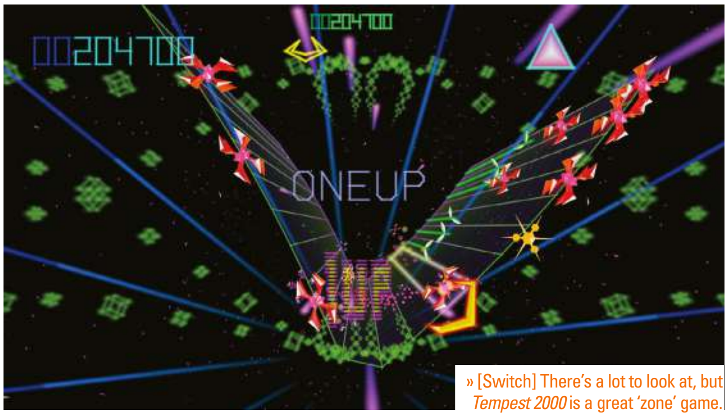
Jeff: As with all of my games, I try to make them as approachable as possible. I always want them to be easy to dive into, yet compelling enough that players will want to continue and progress through them. With *Tempest 4000*, half the battle is already won, given that we have such excellent music already to make players' ears dance. A lot of my focus goes into balancing the difficulty curves and coming up with new gameplay features that will leave players curious about what could possibly be coming up in the higher levels. It's very easy to lose players if a game's difficulty spikes are unreasonable or overly frustrating, causing them to redo levels over and over again, especially a particular level that they grow to dislike. Much of my initial vision revolves around how I want a game to make ME feel, and from there, I am able to walk away from a project knowing that the fans will enjoy it and not want to rage quit.

Shmups aren't popular with mainstream gamers, but you make brilliant examples. What do you love about them?

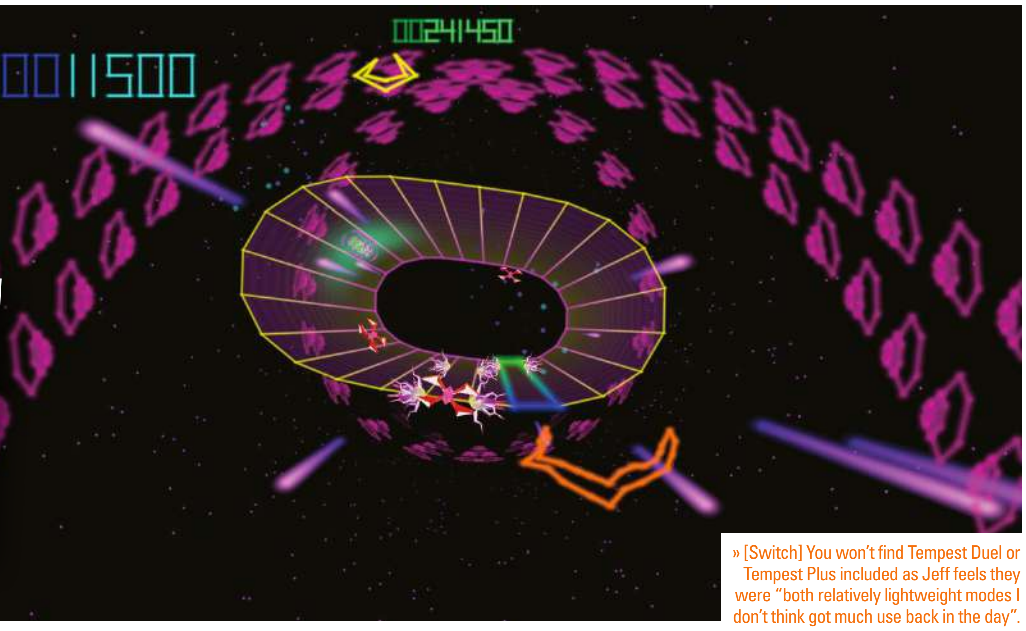
Jeff: This might be rather obvious based on my [existing] work, but I like the kind that are super abstract. I love the feeling of being free from any constraints of realism, where you can just make up stuff as you go along that suits the way the game feels.

There's a certain amount of freedom in being able to do just that, and it's endlessly fun to explore the possibilities that such an approach affords. I'm not really concerned with being off-mainstream, I'm just happy enough if I can get by doing my niche stuff. Mainstream brings with it all kinds of constraints that I don't think I would really enjoy working with. ✱

***Tempest 4000* is available on Switch now for £16. You can also buy it on PC and other contemporary consoles.**



» [Switch] There's a lot to look at, but *Tempest 2000* is a great 'zone' game.



» [Switch] You won't find Tempest Duel or Tempest Plus included as Jeff feels they were "both relatively lightweight modes I don't think got much use back in the day".

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

OCTOBER 2005 – As we enter the final quarter of the year, everyone's getting some treats at the software buffet – well, except those long-suffering GameCube fans. Nick Thorpe fires up the DeLorean to see how things are shaping up for Christmas

NEWS OCTOBER 2005

The comedian Ronnie Barker passed away on 3 October, at the age of 76. His early work included West End roles and radio work, but he was best known for his performances on television. He starred in popular sitcoms such as *Porridge*, *Going Straight* and *Open All Hours*, and co-starred with Ronnie Corbett in the long-running sketch show *The Two Ronnies*.

On 8 October, a deadly magnitude 7.6 earthquake occurred in the Pakistani-administered region of Kashmir. Official figures from the Pakistani government stated 87,350 deaths and 135,000 injuries resulted from the earthquake, with over 70% of the casualties in the city of Muzaffarabad, which was close to the epicentre. The destruction was not confined to Pakistan, with at least 1,350 deaths and 6,266 injuries in India and four deaths in Afghanistan.

American civil rights activist Rosa Parks passed away due to natural causes on 24 October, at 92 years old. She was famously arrested in 1955 for refusing a bus driver's order to give up her bus seat to white passengers, leading black passengers to boycott the bus service in Montgomery, Alabama for just over a year. Her later activism in Detroit focused on housing issues and police violence.

» [Xbox] Bump into truck. Truck into rival. You into first place. It's so very simple.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 2005

With the holiday season in sight, publishers began putting pedal to the metal on their biggest releases – and none were going faster than EA, as *Burnout Revenge* intensified the combat racing of its predecessor and earned widespread acclaim for doing so. The big new gimmick was traffic checking, which allowed you to rear-end civilian vehicles into rival racers. "The new safety of the outbound lane is more than made up for by the massive rise in danger from the tracks themselves," opined *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine* in a 10/10 review. *Official Xbox Magazine* said it, "feels like you're flying a burning fighter jet through hell at 50 million miles an hour", scoring it 8.9/10, and *XBM*'s 9/10 review declared it "different enough to test you all over again". EA also had *Madden NFL 06* on offer on PS2 and Xbox, and it earned 9/10 in *Official PS2* and 8.0/10 in *Official Xbox*.

Quantic Dream's murder mystery adventure game *Fahrenheit* received broad acclaim, with *games™* praising it as "an absorbing, mature videogame, the likes of which we see all too rarely", in an 8/10 review. *Edge* gave it the same score, noting that "every element of Fahrenheit, be it action set-piece, critical interrogation, comic interlude or romantic subplot, is handled with the same level of care". The game also earned 8/10 from *Official PS2*, 8.9/10 from *Official Xbox* and 86% from *PC Gamer*. Tactical third-person shooter sequel *Conflict: Global Storm* also fared well, earning 8.1/10 from *Official Xbox* and 8/10 from *Official PS2*, with the former noting that it was "a small step forward" but "a well-rounded effort". *Serious Sam II* catered well for first person shooter fans. *Official Xbox Magazine* felt it to be "one of those rare games that, although in reality, is no more than a bog-standard shooter, somehow manages to still seem fresh and innovative" and gave it 8.5/10. *PC Gamer* felt that the game "misses the point" of the original due to its many additions, but still gave it 82%.

» [PC] How about shooting weird skeleton baddies in a big, modern city? That looks cool.

Fuel Dumps Destroyed

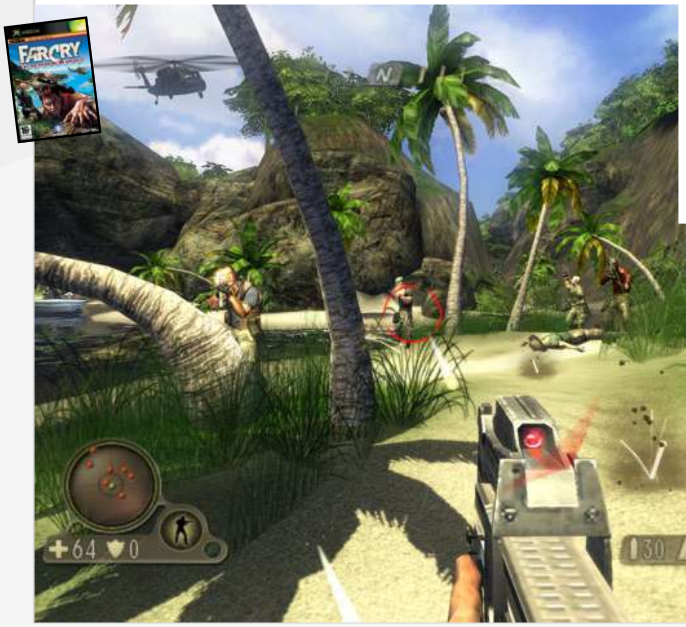
» [PS2] That's more like it, blowing things up with your mates. That's what gaming is.

The imminent arrival of the Xbox 360 had already taken the spotlight from its predecessor, but Microsoft's original console had plenty to offer for its final big Christmas. *Far Cry Instincts* from Ubisoft was a remake of the well-received PC game, which had become exclusive to the Xbox after other versions were canned. XBM felt that "the palm trees and lush grass look so inviting that you may be forgiven for thinking that you've purchased a beach holiday simulator by mistake" and praised the transition from stealth to shooting as the game developed. That earned it 9/10, and *Official Xbox Magazine* was equally impressed, labelling it, "Big, brash, unashamedly daft in parts," and awarding it 9.1/10. Stand-alone third-person shooter expansion *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2: Summit Strike* earned 8.3/10 in *Official Xbox* and 7/10 in *XBM*, with both magazines praising the expansion of multiplayer modes.

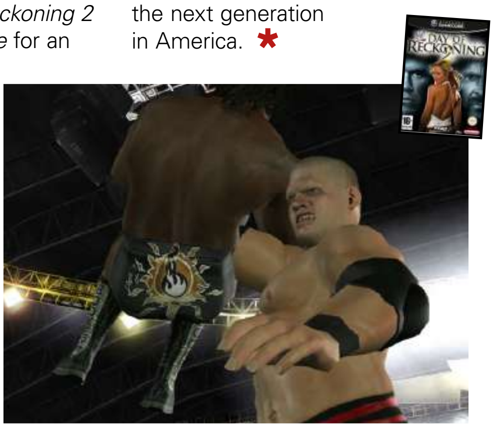
The GameCube had clearly been on its last legs for the whole of 2005, and its situation didn't seem to be improving despite the impending holiday season. The heavily hyped *Geist*, a first-person shooter in which you played a ghost with the power to possess people, failed to impress. *Edge* scored it 4/10, complaining that the game fluctuated "between genuinely interesting and disappointingly incompetent". *NGC* awarded it 61%, stating that the game "has a handful of ideas, some of which are brilliant, some of which aren't and they've simply been slapped on top of a very average shooter". Wrestling sequel *WWE Day Of Reckoning 2* earned 8.9/10 from *Cube* for an improved combat experience that made it "the best wrestling seen on console to date", but criticism was reserved for its frustrating Story mode. *NGC* was less impressed, complaining of a litany of minor issues in a 70% review, including tag-team matches that were hard to finish and AI opponents that refused to attempt pins.

Lastly, the PS2 exclusive tactical RPG *Makai Kingdom* scored 9/10 in *games™* and 8/10 in Edge, with the former commenting that it was "exactly what you'd get if you put *Disgaea* and *Phantom Brave* in a blender". *Edge* felt that it was "hardly different" from those games, but "best approached as an addiction-in-waiting" by fans.

Join us again next time, when Microsoft's Xbox 360 kickstarts the next generation in America. *



» [Xbox] If you're bored of shooting things in a desert, why not try a beach instead?



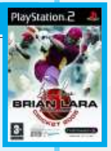
» [GameCube] Booker T takes a chokeslam from Kane, the future mayor of Knox County, Tennessee.

» [PS2] Ooh look, they're sitting down and having wine. How very sophisticated. How very French.

CHARTS

OCTOBER 2005

PLAYSTATION 2

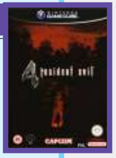


1 – Brian Lara International Cricket (Codemasters)
2 – Fantastic 4 (Activision)
3 – Charlie And The Chocolate Factory (Take 2)
4 – Madagascar (Activision)
5 – Cricket 2005 (EA)

XBOX

1 – Brian Lara International Cricket (Codemasters)
2 – Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
3 – Fantastic 4 (Activision)
4 – Sid Meier's Pirates! (2K Games)
5 – Destroy All Humans! (THQ)

GAMECUBE



1 – Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)
2 – Madagascar (Activision)
3 – Mario Power Tennis (Nintendo)
4 – Medal Of Honor: European Assault (EA)
5 – Star Fox: Assault (Nintendo)

MUSIC

1 – Push The Button (Sugababes)
2 – Tripping (Robbie Williams)
3 – Don't Cha (Pussycat Dolls ft. Busta Rhymes)
4 – All Because Of You (U2)
5 – Baby Goodbye (Friday Hill)

THIS MONTH IN…

Official PlayStation 2 Magazine

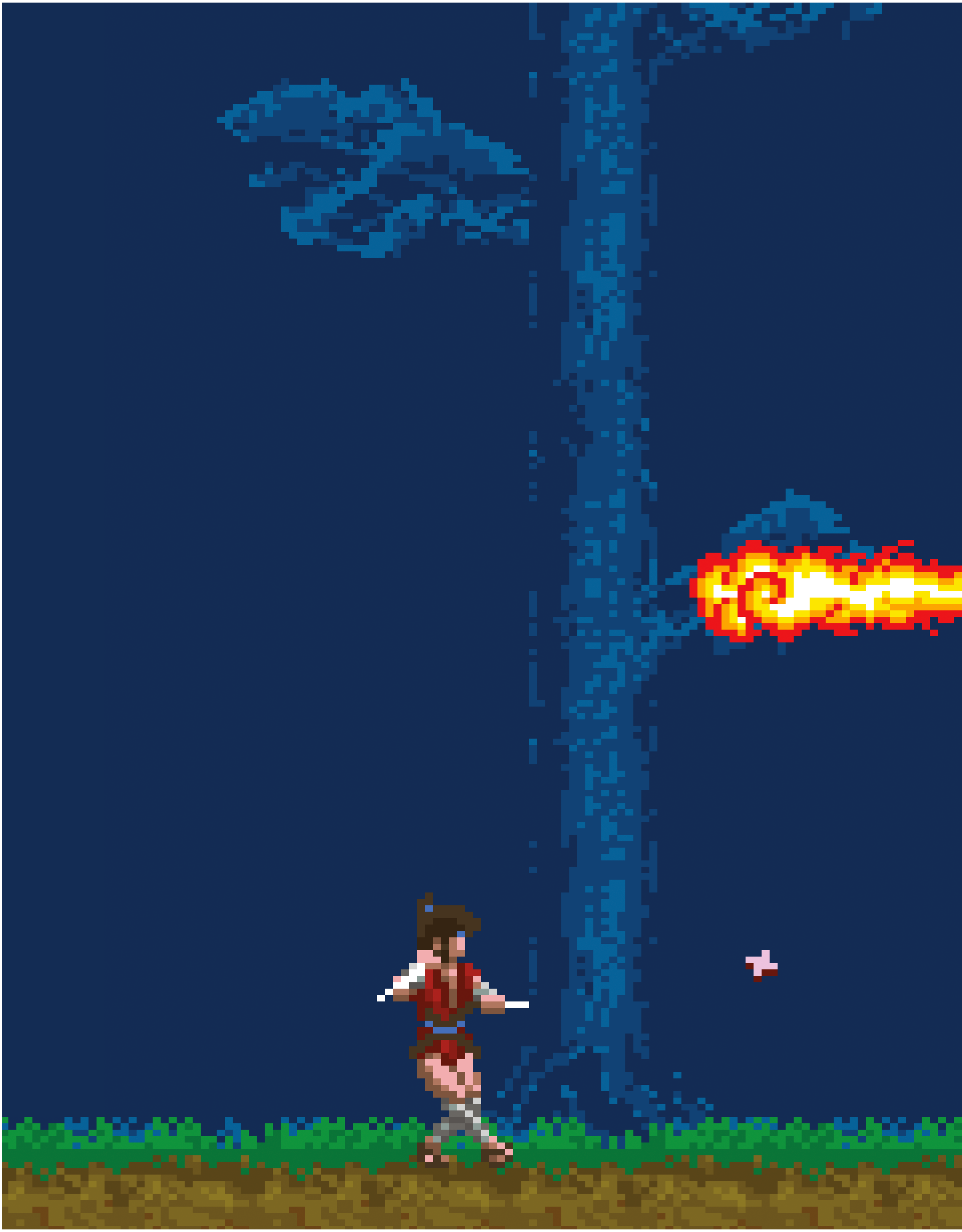
The main games shop in Qalat, Afghanistan, is selling far more controllers than PS2 consoles, as US soldiers are constantly smashing them. The magazine predicts violence in the country will soon be linked to gaming, by "an influential American figure".

Cube

"Did you see that one when the guy decapitated his nagging wife?" So asks Tim, busy extolling the virtues of Roald Dahl's works. "And his first autobiography (*Boy* I think it's called) is also very interesting. So read stuff instead of playing rubbish games."

Edge

This month sees Edge exploring the appeal of plug-and-play retro consoles. "Parents know Intellivision means fun arcade games. They don't have to worry about violent content," says Keith Robinson, explaining the ways in which their appeal goes beyond simple nostalgia.



The Legend Of Kage

BECOME THE NINJA

» ARCADE » 1985 » TAITO

The more I think about it, the more I'm convinced that *Taito Legends 2* is one of the greatest compilations ever released. The first volume was full of familiar delights like *Space Invaders*, *Bubble Bobble*, *Rainbow Islands*, *Rastan* and *The New Zealand Story*, but the second introduced me to many favourites that I'd never encountered before – games like *Cameltry*, *Liquid Kids*, *Elevator Action Returns* and *Cleopatra Fortune*.

One game in the package that I became particularly enthralled with was *The Legend Of Kage*. The plot is simple – Kage must rescue the kidnapped princess Kirihime, by battling his way through a relentless and seemingly endless army of randomly spawning ninjas and magicians. The gameplay is just as simple. You'll leap through a forest, approach and ultimately scale a fortress, then enter it and rescue the princess before doing battle with a boss. The whole sequence can be done in under five minutes but you can carry on until you run out of lives, and an end sequence plays after every second loop.

While it's not complex, it does have the benefit of starring a ninja and Taito managed to nail all the key traits a ninja should have. Gaming ninjas should be fast and agile. Kage runs along at a good pace, can leap dozens of feet into the air, and can even climb trees and other objects should he feel the need to. Ninjas should also feel capable of responding to any threat, and Kage can fire shurikens in any direction, even in mid-air. Finally, ninjas should always have some kind of parry move because of how great you feel when you nail the timing, and Kage can use his short sword to parry enemy shurikens. As a result, *The Legend Of Kage* is a game that doesn't need meticulously placed enemies or clever level designs – it just *feels* right, and sometimes that goes a very long way indeed. *

THE HISTORY OF
WONDER BOY

WHETHER IT MAKES YOU THINK OF A LITTLE LAD ON A SKATEBOARD OR A BOY WHO TURNS INTO BEASTS, THE WONDER BOY SERIES HAS LONG BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH QUALITY. WE SPEAK TO RYUICHI NISHIZAWA TO FIND OUT THE SECRET OF ITS POWER

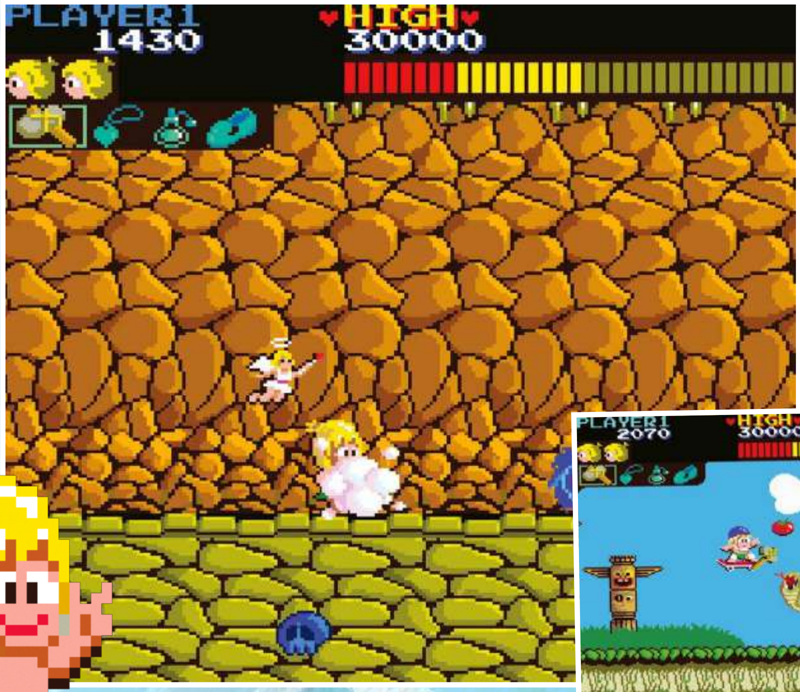
WORDS BY NICK THORPE

» Ryuichi Nishizawa is the cofounder of Westone and creator of the *Wonder Boy* franchise.

There's no question that the Eighties were the decade that videogame heroes were truly born. The games of the Seventies had scarcely had identifiable characters at all, and the most iconic ones were easily the villainous Space Invaders. The Eighties gave us Pac-Man, Q*bert, **Frogger** and Donkey Kong – no contest. But those early greats didn't do away with legions of cars and spaceships overnight, and even by the middle of the decade, you were as likely to see anonymous sportsmen or vehicles in starring roles as any character you could identify. It was with that environment in mind that Escape – later known as Westone – began to develop a game about a little boy wearing some leaves to cover his modesty.

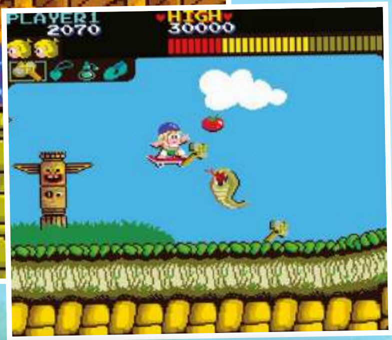
"I think it was the summer of 1985 when we started developing *Wonder Boy*. It was the time when *Gradius* was a big hit at the arcade. At that time, shooting games were the star of arcade games, and I chose the side-scrolling action genre for our first game as an independent developer," says Ryuichi Nishizawa, cofounder of Westone and creator of the *Wonder Boy* series. "Back then, there were not many games with strong characters, and I thought that a game with large characters jumping around the screen would stand out in the arcade. As expected, *Wonder Boy* stood out quite a bit." You played as Tom-Tom, as he was named in English releases, as he attempted to rescue his kidnapped girlfriend Tina. In gameplay terms, this meant venturing through platform obstacle courses and collecting fruit to keep your health up, while avoiding hazards like snakes, snails and fires, as well as battling bosses.

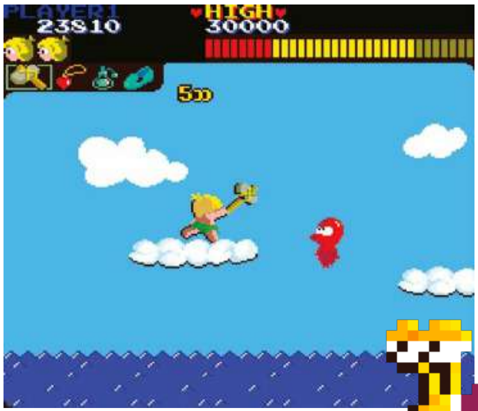
One of the more memorable features of the game was the power-ups you'd get from breaking eggs, including stone axes and a skateboard. "The initial game concept for *Wonder Boy* was designed to have the main character keep running and not be able to stop. This was because I wanted the player to enjoy the jumping action in a continuous ▶



» [Arcade] If you find a fairy, you'll gain temporary invincibility that lets you bash through baddies.

» [Arcade] We'd like to extend our thanks to whoever left their skateboard on Westone's roof.





» [Arcade] Stone axes make light work of the various enemies, but you don't have time to stand and aim.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

WHEN IS A WONDER BOY GAME NOT A WONDER BOY GAME?

The history of the *Wonder Boy* series is rather convoluted, and it's all for one simple reason – Westone owned the game designs and code, but Sega owns the *Wonder Boy* trademark. That meant that anyone could license the games from Westone for conversions, they just couldn't be called *Wonder Boy*. The company that most frequently did so was Hudson Soft, which first licensed the original game for the NES and MSX and called it *Adventure Island*. That's worth a whole boxout on its own though, so we'll cover that elsewhere.

Hudson Soft went on to license four more *Wonder Boy* games, all for the PC Engine and all treated as completely unrelated properties. *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* became *Bikkuriman World*, featuring characters that were introduced on stickers in Bikkuriman chocolate wafer packets. *Wonder Boy III: Monster Lair* came over fully intact, but lost the *Wonder Boy* branding in North America. *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* became *Dragon's Curse* in the US and, very confusingly, *Adventure Island* in Japan. *Wonder Boy In Monster World* was rebranded as *The Dynastic Hero*.

Elsewhere, Jaleco published *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* for the Famicom as *Saiyuuki World*, with a total thematic alteration. That got a sequel of its own, published internationally as *Whomp'em*, which wasn't developed by Westone. In Brazil, Tectoy rebranded the Master System versions of *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* and *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* as *Monica's Gang* games, with new graphics based on the popular comics.

SCORE
12160
LIFE
GOLD
63

And just to really make sure everyone understands the situation, *Monster Boy And The Cursed Kingdom is* a *Wonder Boy* game – there's a Sega copyright on the title screen and it displays the *Wonder Boy* 30th Anniversary logo on the box. But it's called *Monster Boy*, not *Wonder Boy*. Confused yet?

A NEW ADVENTURE

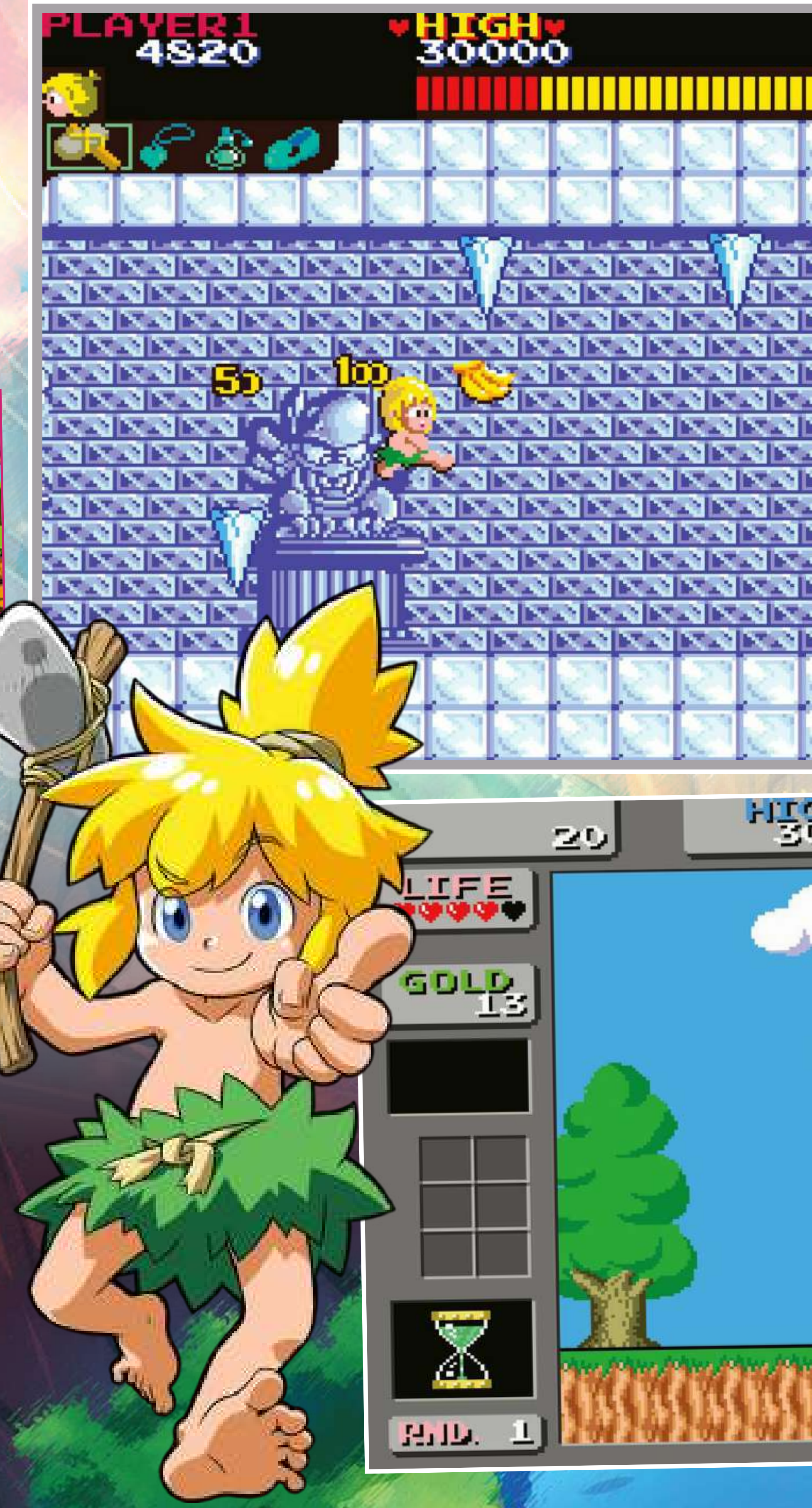
WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE ADVENTURE ISLAND SERIES?

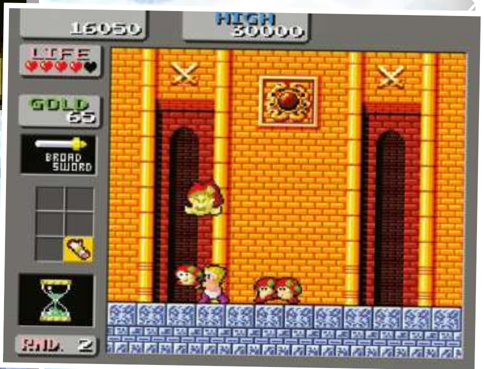
As we mentioned in the What's In A Name? boxout, Hudson Soft licensed the *Wonder Boy* game design and released *Adventure Island* for the NES and MSX. Despite the fact that the company didn't need to change the character, it decided to put its famed personality Takahashi Meijin front and centre. Given his notable ability to fire 16 shots per second in shoot-'em-ups, the choice to put him in a platform game was a surprising one, but it didn't matter to international players who were introduced to the character as Master Higgins.

Adventure Island did quite well for Hudson, so a NES sequel arrived in 1990, developing on the original with new dinosaur mounts and the ability to backtrack. A version of this game came to the Game Boy, as did a version of *Adventure Island 3*, which was released in 1992. The same year also saw the release of *Super Adventure Island* for the SNES and *New Adventure Island* for the PC Engine, both of which stuck closely to the original formula too. The final major entries in the series appeared in 1994, the Japanese Famicom exclusive *Adventure Island IV* and the SNES game *Super Adventure Island II*. These games were both departures from the original *Wonder Boy* formula, with their focus on exploration bringing them closer to the later *Wonder Boy* games instead.

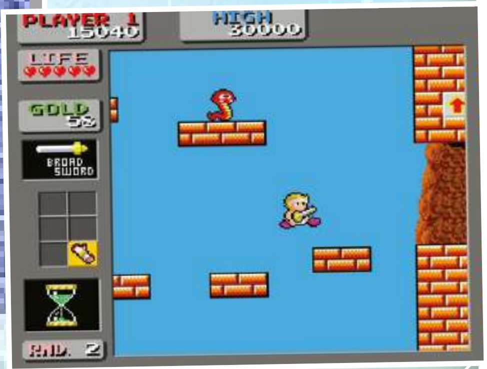
Later on, a PS2 remake of the first game appeared in 2003, and the four NES games appeared in a Game Boy Advance compilation in 2006. The series was last seen on consoles in 2009, when *Adventure Island: The Beginning* was released as a WiiWare game. Konami currently owns the rights to the *Adventure Island* series thanks to its acquisition of Hudson Soft in 2012, and it included *New Adventure Island* as part of the PC Engine Mini's line-up in 2012.

» [Arcade] Grabbing fruit can be a dangerous endeavour when there are deadly icicles overhead.

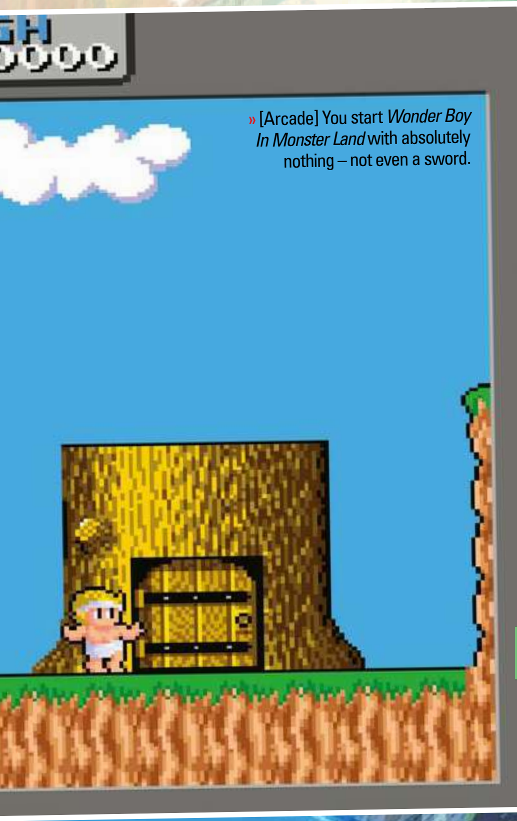




» [Arcade] Boss encounters are much more frequent in *Monster Land* than the original game.



» [Arcade] Those snazzy purple boots highlight Nishizawa's desire to visually represent equipment upgrades.

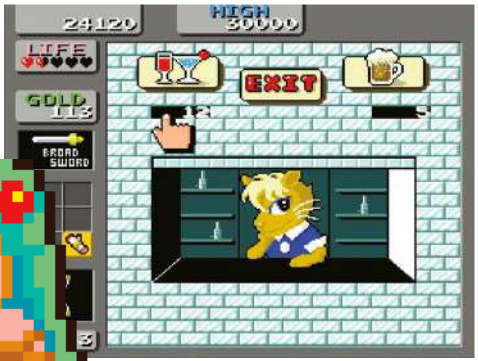


» [Arcade] You start *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* with absolutely nothing – not even a sword.

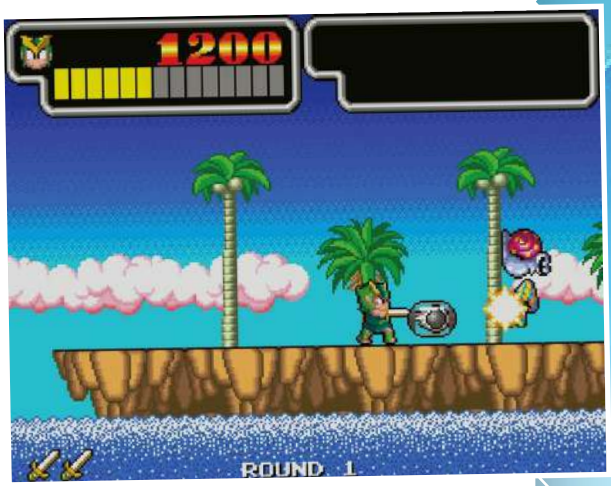
state of tension," says Nishizawa, explaining the inspiration for the latter. "However, when I implemented this specification, I found that the game was more difficult than I had imagined and was not for everyone. So I changed the specifications to allow players to run and stop at their own choice. This made it an action game for everyone, but I also wanted to keep that tension of not being able to stop, so I wondered if there was any way we could still keep this feature. As a result, I came up with the idea of riding a skateboard with a power-up." It's a decision that makes a lot of sense, but one detail makes it rather odd. "The reason why I suddenly turned my attention to skateboards is because I happened to find one on the rooftop of the building where the development office was located. I don't know who left it there, but without this encounter, Boy might never have ridden a skateboard."

W*onder Boy* arrived in arcades in early 1986, using Sega's 8-bit System 1 board. The compelling game design and cute look delivered the success both Escape and Sega would have hoped for – when Japanese coin-op magazine *Game Machine* listed the best-performing PCBs of the second half of 1986, *Wonder Boy* was in tenth place. Home conversions soon followed, but Westone wasn't involved with them. "Since we were concentrating on developing arcade games, we had no contact with the people in charge of developing console ports. The people around us who supported our business took care of that. At that time, our interest was in the latest arcade games," explains Nishizawa. "The hardware specifications for console games at that time were low, so it was difficult to port arcade games as they were. I am sure the developers who were in charge of the porting must have had a difficult time."

Indeed, the first home release for Sega's SG-1000 was heavily cut down, omitting iconic features such as the skateboard. The Master System version was much more faithful and actually added extra stages, and formed the basis of the later Game Gear version. Then there is the whole *Adventure Island* saga, which is covered in the A New Adventure boxout. Even Nishizawa didn't know about all of the versions. "Although I was aware of the Master System and Famicom versions whenever they were released in Japan, it was more than ten years later that I learned of the existence of PC versions such as for Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum. We had no information from overseas," he says. "It was only recently that I learned that *Wonder Boy* has fans in North America and Europe, as well as in South America and the Middle East."



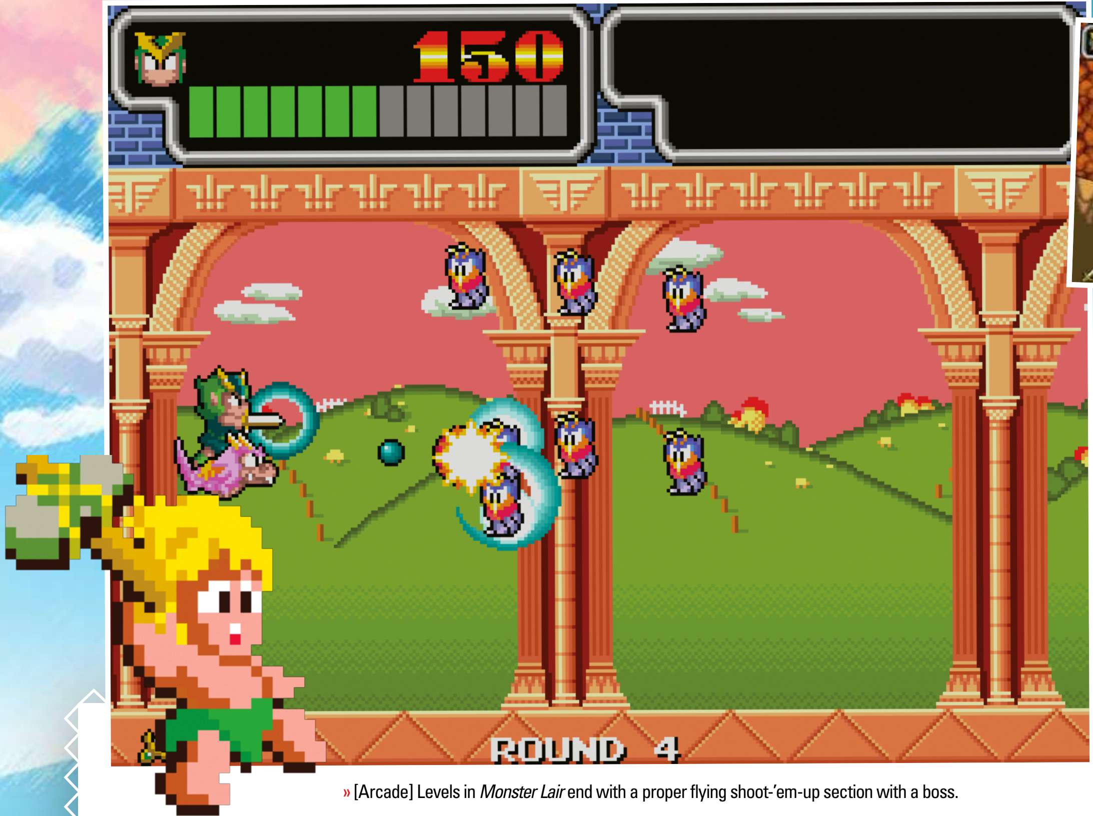
» [Arcade] Shops and taverns appear in the series for the first time in *Wonder Boy In Monster Land.*



» [Arcade] It's very easy to recognise *Monster Lair* as a *Wonder Boy* game, visually speaking.

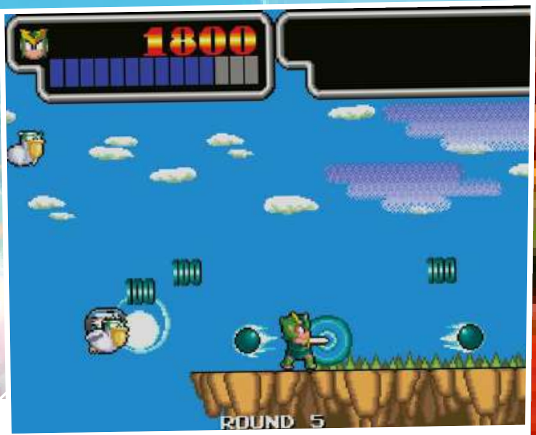
"THE INITIAL GAME CONCEPT FOR WONDER BOY WAS DESIGNED TO HAVE THE MAIN CHARACTER KEEP RUNNING AND NOT BE ABLE TO STOP"
RYUICHI NISHIZAWA

Rather than providing more of the same, Westone set to work on a sequel which made some fairly radical gameplay adjustments. "We wanted to create an RPG in an arcade game. To introduce a complex game system that requires players to continue playing, without regard to the rules of arcade games – which usually must be completed in a short period of time – we needed to make it easy for new players to get into it," says Nishizawa. "We therefore chose the same platform action game format as *Wonder Boy* and also added the name *Wonder Boy* in the game title. We thought that even people who had never played an RPG before would try to play it, if they had known and played *Wonder Boy* before. This attempt was a success, and contributed to the establishment of the action RPG game genre." This time your goal was to defeat the Meka Dragon that was terrorising the land. Skateboards and stone axes were out, though – instead you found ▶



» [Arcade] Levels in *Monster Lair* end with a proper flying shoot-'em-up section with a boss.

6130
ROUND 3



» [Arcade] Weapon power-ups are basically the same in both platform and shoot-'em-up sections of *Monster Lair.*

"MONSTER LAIR WAS INTENDED FROM THE BEGINNING TO BE DEVELOPED AS AN EVOLUTION OF WONDER BOY"
RYUICHI NISHIZAWA

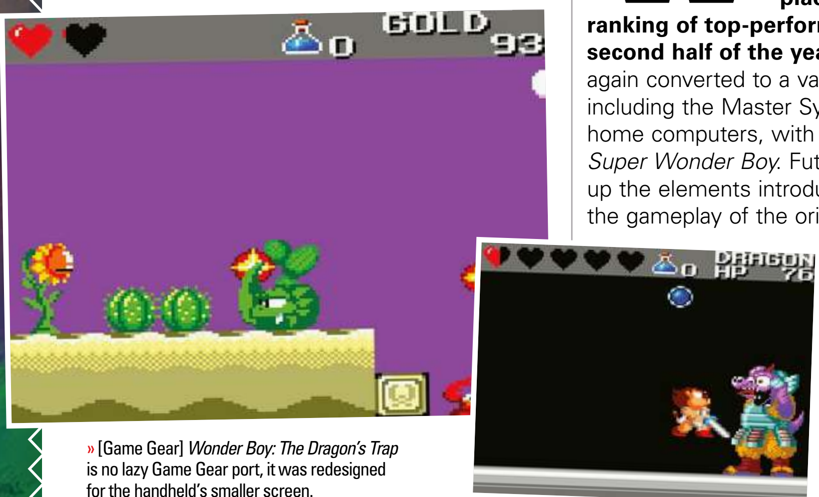
yourself buying hints at taverns, as well as weapons and armour in shops, all with gold gained from defeating enemies along the way.

"We wanted to create a game where you could change your equipment and have it reflected in the visuals," explains Nishizawa, regarding the change of approach. "Our desire to create RPGs for arcade games was greatly influenced by the classic RPG *Wizardry,* which we were playing on our PCs at the time. At the time, *Wizardry* had a simple, text-based screen structure, and dungeons were depicted using wireframes. The character you controlled did not appear on the screen, and even if you changed equipment such as swords and armour, you could not see the changes on the screen." The Westone team felt that seeing the fruits of your labour would make the game more engrossing. "We wanted to show the changes in equipment that *Wizardry* didn't show on the screen. We wanted to show the development of the main character in a way that was easy to understand. I think this 'equipment change system' was an excellent idea to directly demonstrate the fun of RPGs to the players."

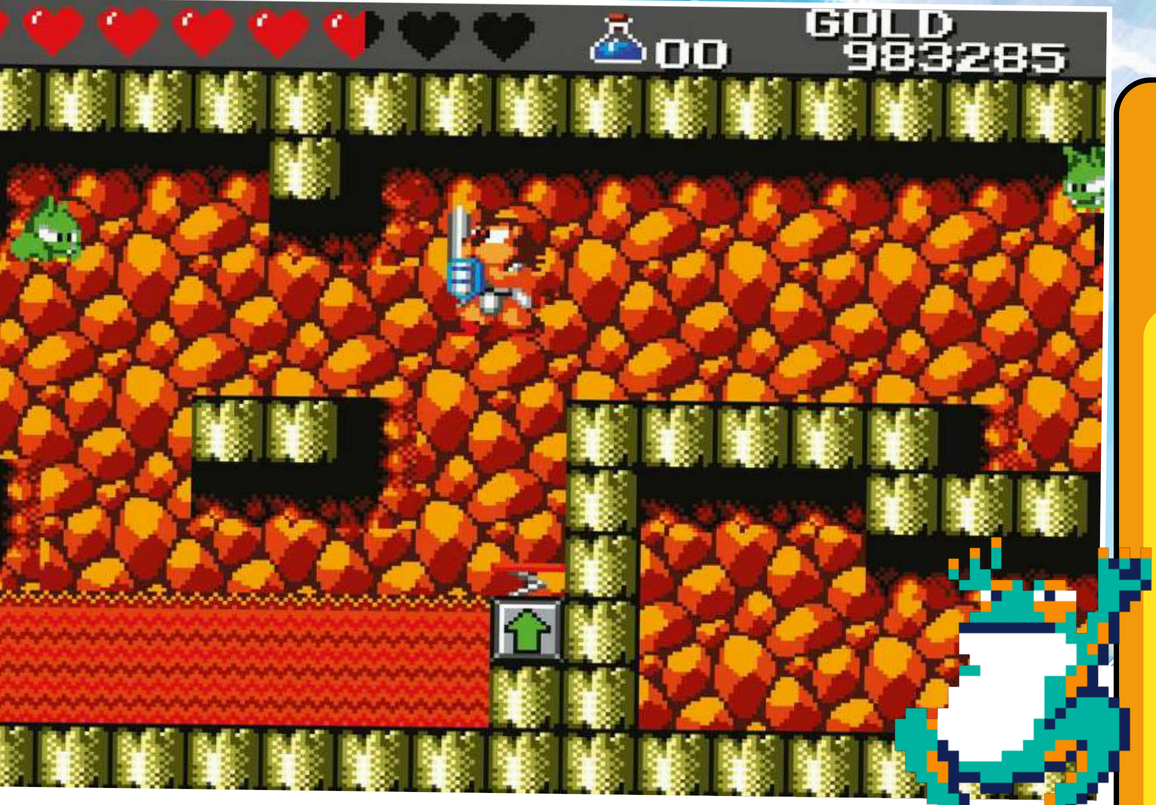
W*onder Boy In Monster Land* was popular in arcades upon its release in 1987, earning 25th place in *Game Machine*'s ranking of top-performing PCBs for the second half of the year. The game was again converted to a variety of formats including the Master System and various home computers, with some using the name *Super Wonder Boy.* Future games would pick up the elements introduced here rather than the gameplay of the original game, and we had long wondered why this was the case. "This is due to the different nature of arcade and console games," Nishizawa tells us. "Consoles allow for time-consuming adventures that involve solving puzzles, whereas arcades do not. As the primary market for games shifted from arcades with their simple gameplay to consoles with their more complex gameplay, *Monster Land* was more open to expansion and evolution."

With the next game once again being an arcade game, Westone reverted to a slightly more simple approach. *Wonder Boy III: Monster Lair* saw Leo and Papillo – or Priscilla, depending on your version – trying to fend off a monster invasion. The game design changed once again, with a new blend of auto-scrolling platforming and shoot-'em-up action tried for the first time. "*Monster Lair* was intended from the beginning to be developed as an evolution of *Wonder Boy,*" says Nishizawa. "Since the hardware was changed to System 16 and evolved from 8-bit to 16-bit, it is now possible to display more colours and larger characters. I wanted to create a platform action game that took full advantage of these features. Then I combined that with the world view and story of *Monster Land.*"

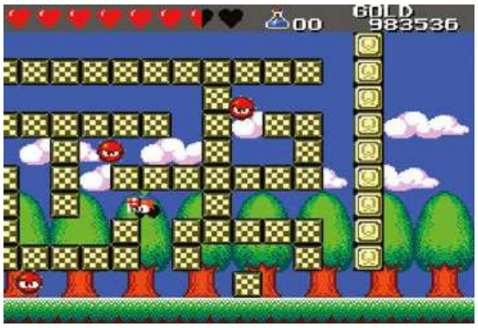
Although it was intended to develop on the first game's concepts, it was a seemingly innocuous new feature that would change the game's ultimate direction. "At the time, two-player games were becoming common in the arcade game market in order to increase income. Therefore, we decided to create a two-player platform action game. But the game design process was extremely difficult," Nishizawa recalls. "The player two would get in the way and prevent you from playing the game as you would want to. We came to the conclusion that it was impossible to focus on the action of jumping at the right time, and decided to emphasise the shooting element



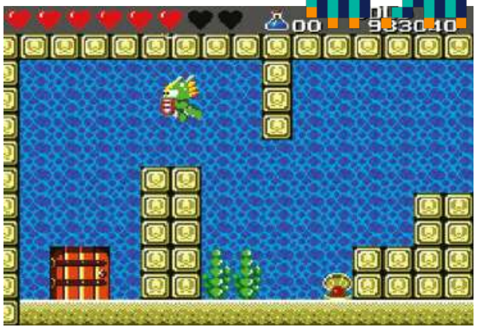
» [Game Gear] *Wonder Boy: The Dragon's Trap* is no lazy Game Gear port, it was redesigned for the handheld's smaller screen.



» [Master System] In places, *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* could pass for an early Mega Drive game.



» [Master System] As well as fitting through small spaces, Mouse Man can walk on walls.



» [Master System] Piranha Man's ability to swim is vital for accessing certain parts of the ocean.

instead. Such twists and turns were part of the development process." Unfortunately, the new approach didn't do *Wonder Boy III: Monster Lair* many favours. It was released into Japanese arcades in late 1988 and didn't last nearly as long as its predecessors in *Game Machine*'s top games rankings. The highly accurate PC Engine conversion was released in 1989, and was one of the earliest games to use the CD-ROM format. A Mega Drive version was released to average reviews in Japan in 1990, and it didn't fare much better upon its PAL release in 1991.

As Nishizawa notes, performing three major overhauls in three games isn't the most efficient way to go about development. "In general, changing the game genre will increase development time and development costs because there will be less opportunity to reuse existing assets from the past and knowledge learned from each staff member's experience. If you want to maximise the use of past development assets, it is better not to change the genre," he says. "Unlike today, game development at that time took it for granted to create something new and unprecedented, so there was no idea such as reusing assets from the past. It would be more accurate to say that we always started from scratch and knew of no other development methods." Still, after this point, the changes between games would become less radical.

Monster Lair is typically overshadowed by *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*, which was developed as a successor to *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*. According to Nishizawa, the key consideration prior to this game had been, "How do you get people to insert 100-yen coins in an arcade game?" Designing the game for the Master System allowed the team to approach development differently. "Players have already ▶

COMIC CAPERS

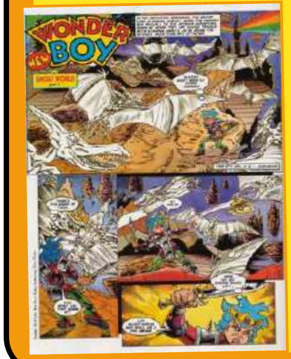
HOW WONDER BOY'S ADVENTURES WERE BROUGHT TO THE PRINTED PAGE

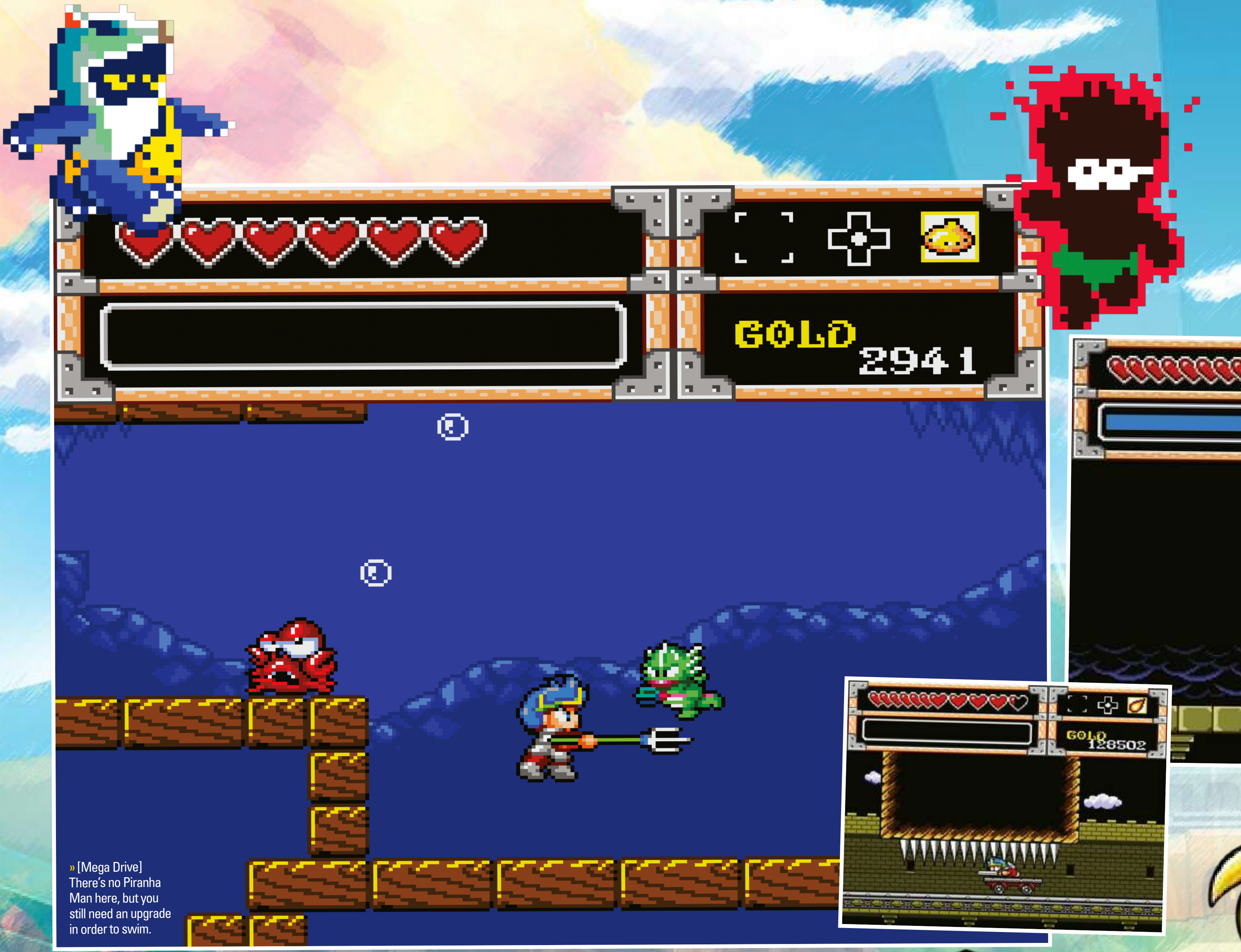
MONSTERS & BOYS WITH BLUE HAIR
Sonic the comic
95p
Robotnik Rules!
WONDER BOY'S LAST STAND!
PLUS! STREETS OF RAGE
KID CHAMELEON
MEGA-SPECIAL PREVIEW: SONIC CD

When *Sonic The Comic* launched in 1993, it was intended to be far more than just a showcase for Sega's spiky mascot. To provide a dose of variety and promote the wider world of Sega games, strips were introduced for a variety of series, with the first batch including the likes of *Shinobi*, *Golden Axe* and of course *Wonder Boy*. These were completely unknown to the Westone team back in Japan. "I didn't see it back then when the comic strip was released, but I learned about those comics more than ten years later. It was a great honour and I wish I had known about it earlier," says Nishizawa.

The *Wonder Boy* strip is based on *Wonder Boy In Monster World* and had two stories, the first being *Wonder Boy In Demon World*, which ran from issue two to issue nine. The story starts with our hero Shion being distracted by a demon attack, while his village is torched and its inhabitants kidnapped. On his quest to rescue them, he finds himself afflicted with a curse by the demonic ruler Grimomen, which is slowly turning him into a demon. He eventually ventures into Demon World to face off with Grimomen and rescue his people.

Wonder Boy In Ghost World ran from issue 22 to issue 27, and sees Shion travelling to the Skyrock Mountains. There he finds that ghostly dinosaurs have been attacking the locals, with the cosmologist Lukout being one of the few to have stayed to fight. They end up heading to Ghost World, where the Dinosaur King reveals his plot to regain control of the overworld. He's eventually defeated and a third strip named *Wonder Boy In Witchery World* is teased, but it never appears – unless you count the gag strip in Sonic The Comic Online.

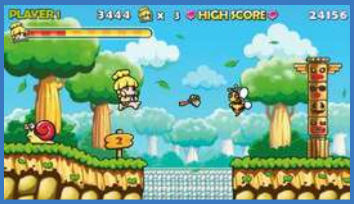




» [Mega Drive] There's no Piranha Man here, but you still need an upgrade in order to swim.

WONDERS NEVER CEASE

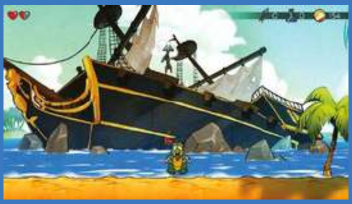
THE REMAKES THAT HAVE KEPT PAST WONDER BOY ADVENTURES FRESH



WONDER BOY RETURNS

2016

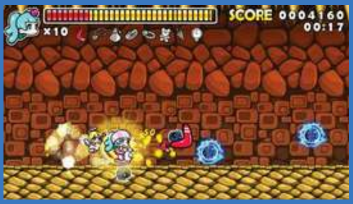
Korean developer CFK was behind this update of the original game, which featured a new art style and new stage designs. "I supervised the design and the additional elements of the story," says Nishizawa. We liked the new bosses but not the art style, and gave it 62% in issue 164.



WONDER BOY: THE DRAGON'S TRAP

2017

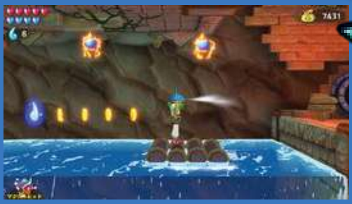
Lizardcube's take on *Wonder Boy III* has new hand-drawn graphics as well as the original Master System sprites. Nishizawa supervised and provided gameplay feedback, but admits "I had nothing to say about it because it was very well finished." We gave it 90% in issue 168.



WONDER BOY RETURNS: REMIX

2019

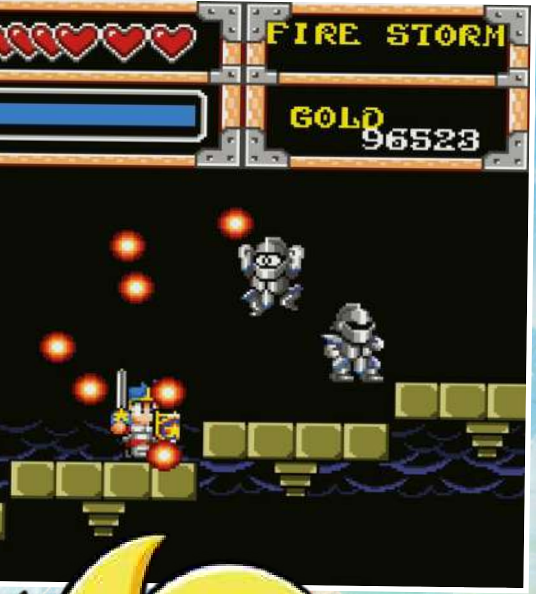
CFK had a second crack at the whip, with Nishizawa noting "a remix version was developed with a new level design, which I reviewed and found to be a great improvement in quality". It is actually far closer to the original game than the first release of *Wonder Boy Returns.*



WONDER BOY: ASHA IN MONSTER WORLD

2021

G Choice and ININ Games published this direct remake of *Monster World IV.* Nishizawa spent 20 months at the helm as designer and director, working on his first-ever game with 3D visuals. We gave it 70% in issue 222, saying that it "does justice to the Mega Drive original".



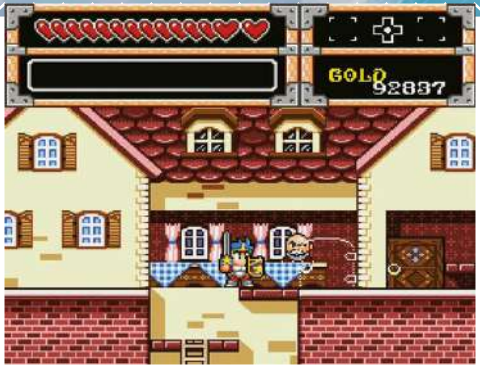
» [Mega Drive] Magic spells were a featured part of *Monster World*, upgraded from being single-use items before.

purchased the package and are ready to play. In other words, even if the game is a little complicated, players are likely to play it," says Nishizawa. "This is what I felt was the biggest difference when planning a console game. In an arcade game, you should never be in a situation where you don't know how to proceed, but in a console game, not only is this allowed, but the uncertainty can motivate the player to play. I wanted to create a game that would allow players to unravel many of those riddles."

The Dragon's Trap pulls the *Rocky II* trick of starting at the end of the previous instalment, where our hero fights the Meka Dragon. He's transformed into the fire-breathing Lizard Man upon defeating his foe, leaving him to regain his humanity by defeating a variety of other dragons – each of which will transform him into a different kind of animal, such as a bird, a lion or a mouse. Rather than taking place over a series of linear stages punctuated by boss fights, *The Dragon's Trap* is an early example of the Metroidvania subgenre, with an enormous map that can only be fully explored using the abilities of each animal form you can gain. The game was released in North America and Europe in 1989 and quickly became known as one of the greatest Master System games, earning 86% from *CVG*, 92% from *S: The Sega Magazine* and 95% from *Mean Machines*. Despite being coded with the intention of a Japanese release, the Master System was already dead in its home market before the game was finished, leaving its FM soundtrack largely unheard.

Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap did see a Japanese release though, as the Game Gear version arrived as *Monster World II* in 1992. "In the past, I had left the porting of our own games to other companies, but at this time I felt that we could not do that," remembers Nishizawa. "The Game Gear version needed to be redesigned, so I decided to remake it ourselves." This redesign was necessitated by the switch to a smaller, lower-resolution handheld display. "The impact of smaller screens on game design is greater than you might imagine," Nishizawa tells us. "By making the display area smaller, there was a risk that I would lose the overview of 'what do I do to get that treasure chest?' For example, the smaller screen size would have made it impossible to see the other side of a wall. The smaller screen size meant that the treasure chests that were supposed to be visible on the other side of the wall would no longer be visible, which meant that the carefully designed level design would be lost. I was also able to adjust the difficulty level, so I think I was able to achieve a very high level of perfection."

» [Mega Drive] *Wonder Boy In Monster World* sought to tie elements of past *Wonder Boy* games together.



» [Mega Drive] You get a nice little cut-away effect when you enter buildings in *Monster World*.

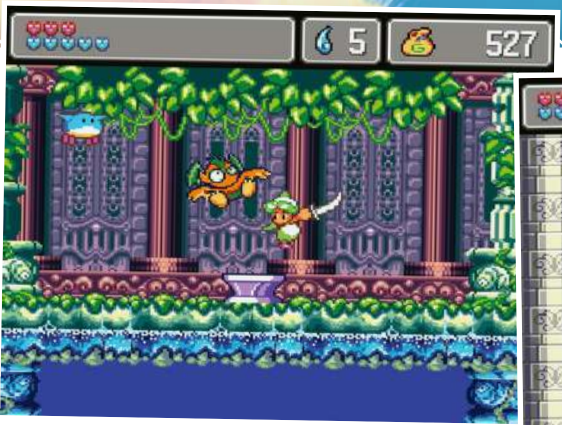
> **"THE GAME GEAR VERSION NEEDED TO BE REDESIGNED, SO I DECIDED TO REMAKE IT OURSELVES"**
> **RYUICHI NISHIZAWA**

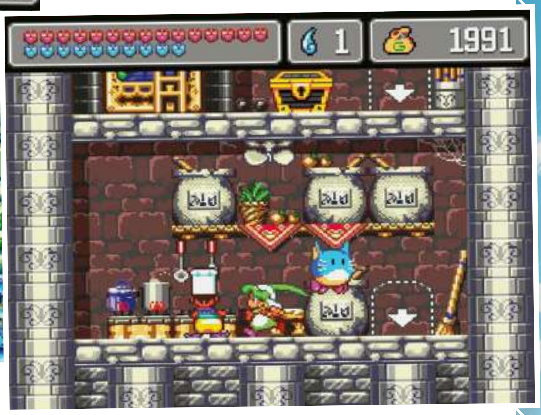
Nishizawa took a step back from design for *Wonder Boy In Monster World* – or *Wonder Boy V: Monster World III*, to use its confusing Japanese name. "After completing the Game Gear version of *Wonder Boy: The Dragon's Trap*, I guess I had a hard time developing the fantastic arcade game *Clockwork Aquario*, which was released in November 2021. I had to make *Aquario* over and over again," he laughs. "From the beginning, it was decided that *Monster World III* would be a compilation of past titles," he continues. "Since this was our first time developing a game for the Mega Drive, there was a lot of technical trial and error. I then applied a variety of visual effects that would give the game a greater emotional impact and excitement than ever before. I think I also focused on creating our own development tools, such as tools for graphic design, with an eye toward the future. This allowed us to start the development of *Monster World IV* smoothly."

"I thought that it was getting closer to an RPG. The game genre is action RPG, so the game system is a fusion of action and RPG, but the RPG elements are stronger than in the previous titles," says Nishizawa when asked ▶

▶ what he thought of *Wonder Boy In Monster World*. "There are more characters and dungeons, and I thought it was a game that could be played smoothly and with plenty of volume." Building on the formula developed in the previous *Monster World* games, Westone increased the complexity of the dungeons and added plenty of additional secrets, with many opportunities to converse with non-player characters to learn about those secrets. Protagonist Shion could permanently learn magic spells instead of grabbing single-use items, and helper characters accompanied you though the dungeons.

UK publications liked *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* when it arrived in 1992 – it scored 84% in *Sega Force*, 88% in *Mean Machines* and 90% in *MegaTech*, with all praising the stronger RPG element. US critics were less impressed, with mixed reviews in *Electronic Gaming Monthly* and *Game Informer* both expressing the view that it was better suited to younger players. The game was also released on the Master System in Europe, and received 57% from *Sega Power*, 75% from *Sega Force* and 88% from Mean Machines Sega, with reviewers applauding the graphics and criticising the music and low difficulty level.


» [Mega Drive] Fighting enemies in *Monster World IV* is still part of the game, but the platforming is the highlight here.


» [Mega Drive] Pepelogoo accompanies you for much of your adventure, and grows as you make progress.

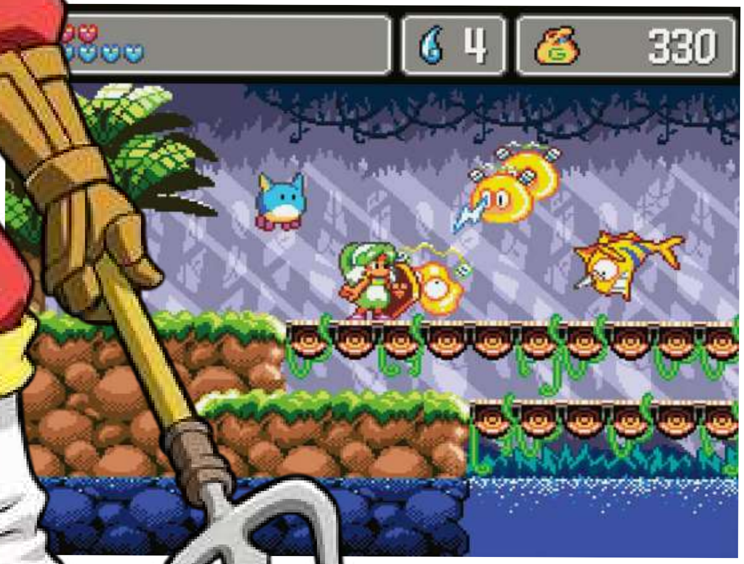
The next game in the series ditched the *Wonder Boy* branding, and the boy with it. "Since *Monster World III* was based on the idea of a compilation of past titles, *Monster World IV* needed to have a new twist," says Nishizawa. The game starred Asha, a young girl who sets out to rescue elemental spirits after hearing whispers in the wind. This quest would take place in a world rather unlike any previous *Wonder Boy* game. "When I plan a new game, I usually start with visual images. So, what should the world design look like? What kind of scenery should be displayed in the background of the game screen? As a result, I decided to use an Arabic style," the developer tells us. "Instead of a vast land, the adventure is set in a small country surrounded by desert, creating a unique environment not found in any other game. I believe that our attempt was a success."

> "SINCE MONSTER WORLD III WAS BASED ON THE IDEA OF A COMPILATION OF PAST TITLES, MONSTER WORLD IV NEEDED TO HAVE A NEW TWIST"
> **RYUICHI NISHIZAWA**

M*onster World IV* cut back the RPG elements in favour of platforming, and returned to more linear level structures. "*Monster World III* had more RPG elements, so this may be a reaction to that. I also like action games myself, so I think that's why I made the game more action-packed," says Nishizawa.

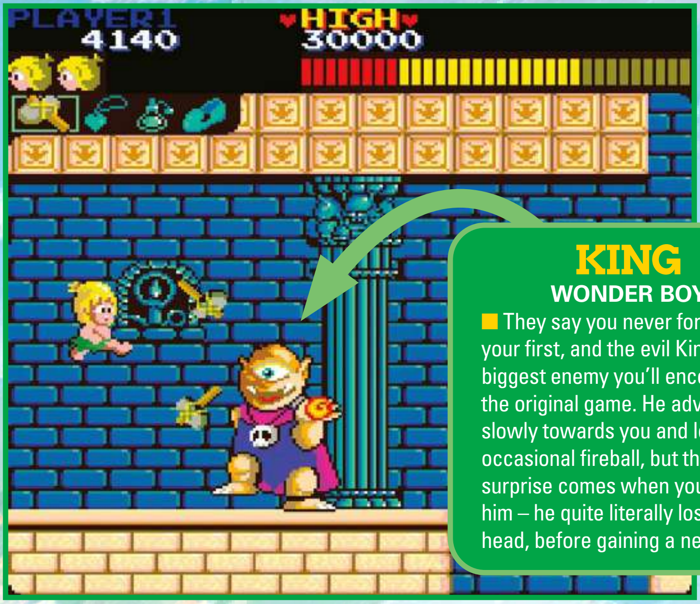
"The main focus of *Monster World IV* was the connection with Pepelogoo. I wanted the player as Asha to develop a friendship with Pepelogoo through completing the stages together, instead of focusing on the story," he continues. "That's why I placed more emphasis on the platform gameplay than ever before." Indeed, Asha's blue buddy literally grows up as you progress through the game, and he is key to the platforming. He can carry Asha across gaps by floating or provide a launching point for double jumps, and can even serve as a means to ride gushing lava.

Monster World IV was released for the Mega Drive in April 1994, and was moderately well received, earning 7.25/10 from the Japanese magazine *Beep! Mega Drive*. It was the first and only game in the series to be released exclusively in Japan. "It took co-operation with Sega to translate the scenario into English and implement it," Nishizawa explains. "*Monster World IV* was released at the end of the Mega Drive's lifespan, and the next generation Saturn was already on the way. Sega was busy with preparations for the Saturn, and I think it was difficult for them to devote human resources to the overseas sales of *Monster World IV*." An official translation was finally created in 2012 with the help of Sega and M2, and was first released on the Wii Virtual Console service. ▶


» [Mega Drive] *Monster World IV* is graphically excellent, carrying off its unique style effortlessly.

BOSS RUSH

THE BEST OF THE BIG BADDIES FROM THE WONDER BOY SERIES



KING

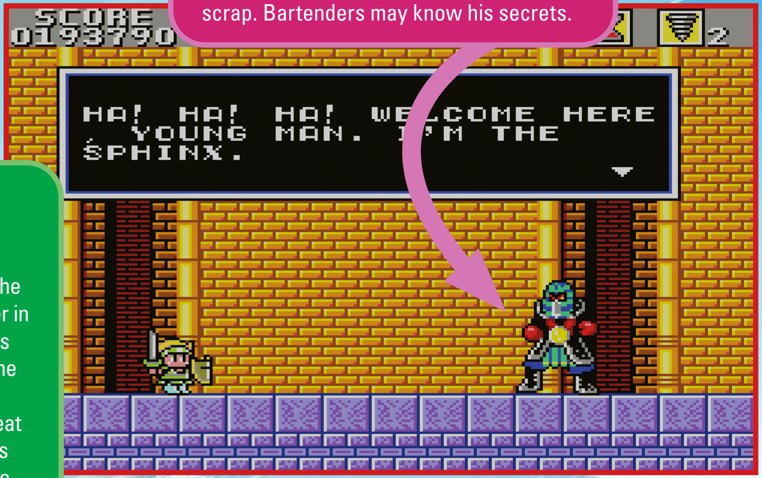
WONDER BOY

■ They say you never forget your first, and the evil King is the biggest enemy you'll encounter in the original game. He advances slowly towards you and lobs the occasional fireball, but the big surprise comes when you defeat him – he quite literally loses his head, before gaining a new one.

SPHINX

WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND

■ The great thing about this boss fight is that it never has to happen. Upon arriving at the boss room, the Sphinx will ask you a question about itself. Get it right and you walk free, get it wrong and it's time for a scrap. Bartenders may know his secrets.

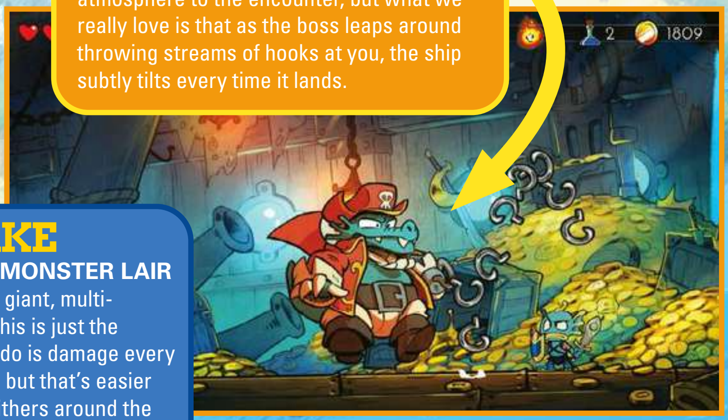


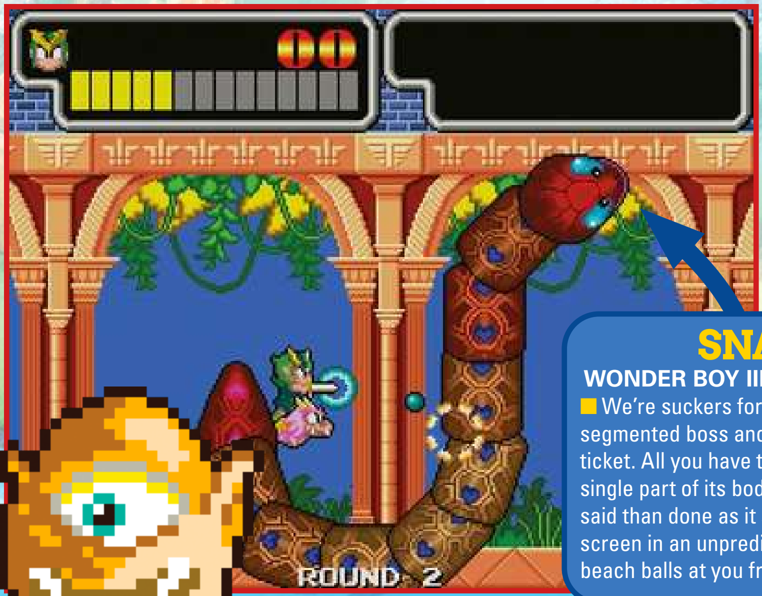
HA! HA! HA! WELCOME HERE YOUNG MAN. I'M THE SPHINX.

PIRATE DRAGON

WONDER BOY: THE DRAGON'S TRAP

■ This fight does so much to show off Lizardcube's fantastic graphical upgrade. The background really adds a great sense of atmosphere to the encounter, but what we really love is that as the boss leaps around throwing streams of hooks at you, the ship subtly tilts every time it lands.





SNAKE

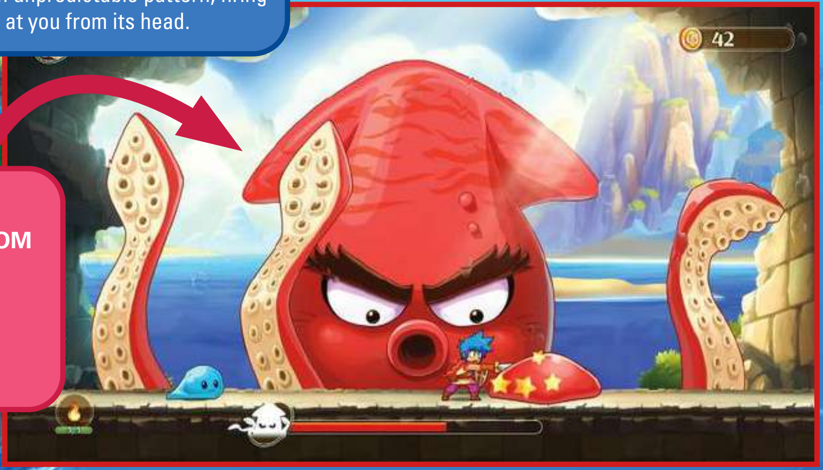
WONDER BOY III: MONSTER LAIR

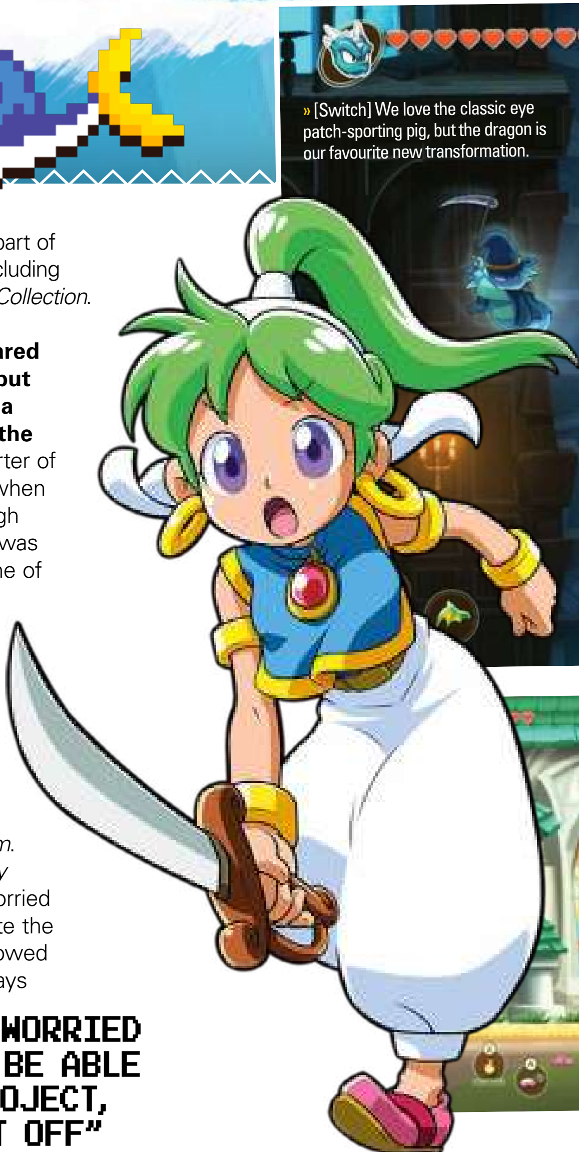
■ We're suckers for a giant, multi-segmented boss and this is just the ticket. All you have to do is damage every single part of its body, but that's easier said than done as it slithers around the screen in an unpredictable pattern, firing beach balls at you from its head.

SQUID

MONSTER BOY AND THE CURSED KINGDOM

■ Turning this towering terror into sashimi is a tall order, as it has multiple methods of attack. It can spit out annoying little slime enemies, or in a funny moment, chew you up and spit you into the screen. When it tries to strike with the tentacles, hit back.





» [Switch] We love the classic eye patch-sporting pig, but the dragon is our favourite new transformation.

▶ It has since been made available as part of various digital and physical products, including the Mega Drive Mini and *Wonder Boy Collection*.

For a long time that appeared to be it for *Wonder Boy*, but 2014 marked the start of a surprising comeback for the series. "I became a supporter of Game Atelier, a French game studio, when they raised funds for a new title through crowd funding," says Nishizawa. This was to be a platform adventure by the name of *Flying Hamster II: Knight Of The Golden Seed*. "This new title was a tribute to the *Monster World* series, so I suggested to them that they could include characters from the original *Monster World* series in the game." The game became *Monster Boy And The Wizard Of Booze*, before eventually settling on its final title of *Monster Boy And The Cursed Kingdom*. "After five years of work, *Monster Boy* was completed. At one point I was worried that they might not be able to complete the project, but they pulled it off. They showed a wonderful passion for this game," says

> "AT ONE POINT I WAS WORRIED THAT THEY MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT, BUT THEY PULLED IT OFF"
> **RYUICHI NISHIZAWA**

RELIVING THE LEGEND

WONDER BOY COLLECTION IS THE LATEST WAY TO EXPERIENCE THE SERIES

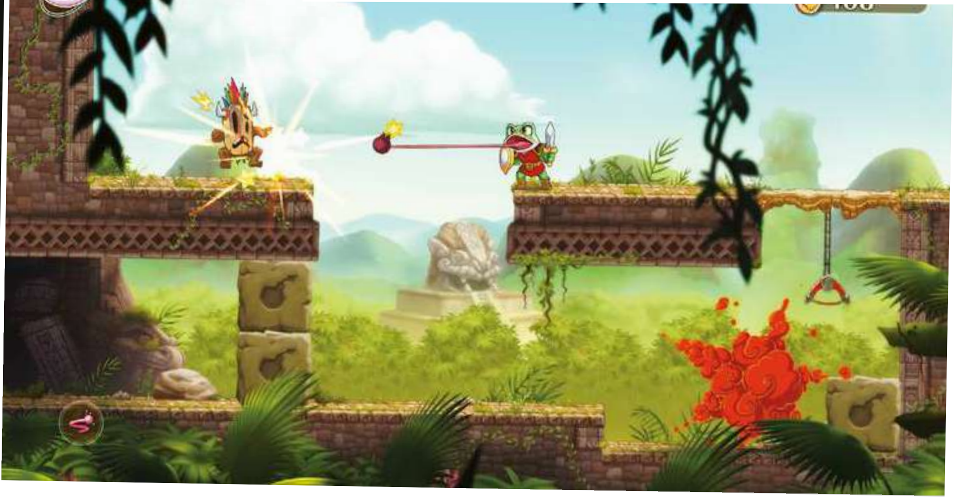
PS4
NINTENDO SWITCH
35
ANNIVERSARY
WONDER BOY
COLLECTION

If you're thirsting for adventure after revisiting *Wonder Boy*'s history, a pair of new collections are available that should deliver what you're looking for. *Wonder Boy Collection* is available digitally and physically via ININ Games, and contains *Wonder Boy, Wonder Boy In Monster Land, Wonder Boy In Monster World* and *Monster World IV*. The *Wonder Boy Anniversary Collection* adds *Wonder Boy III: Monster Lair* and *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*, as well as Sega console conversions of the various games in the package. This definitive package was only available via Strictly Limited Games, so it may be trickier to acquire.

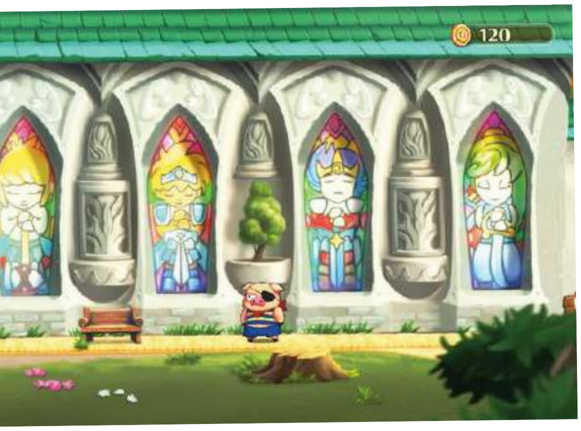
"This product is an answer to the growing demand of *Wonder Boy* series fans who want to play the series' titles on the latest gaming platforms in a casual way. Of course, I hope that people who have never played the series before will also be able to enjoy it," says Nishizawa. "Especially since *Monster Lair* was not available on PS4 or Switch, I'm sure there are many fans who have been looking forward to this. I recently learned that there is a surprisingly big number of fans who love that vivid screen and the groovy music," he adds with a laugh. "The game is quite a bargain, so please get it and play it. I think the package illustration drawn by Mrs Ohzora alone is worth a lot."

Though Nishizawa has naturally not been involved in game design as the games already exist, he has worked on the package. "I spent a lot of time working on the art book, soundtrack, cards and games included in the collector's edition," he explains. "This edition will also include a set of collector's coins, for which I designed icons featuring the main character Boy and Shion. I put a lot of effort into it."

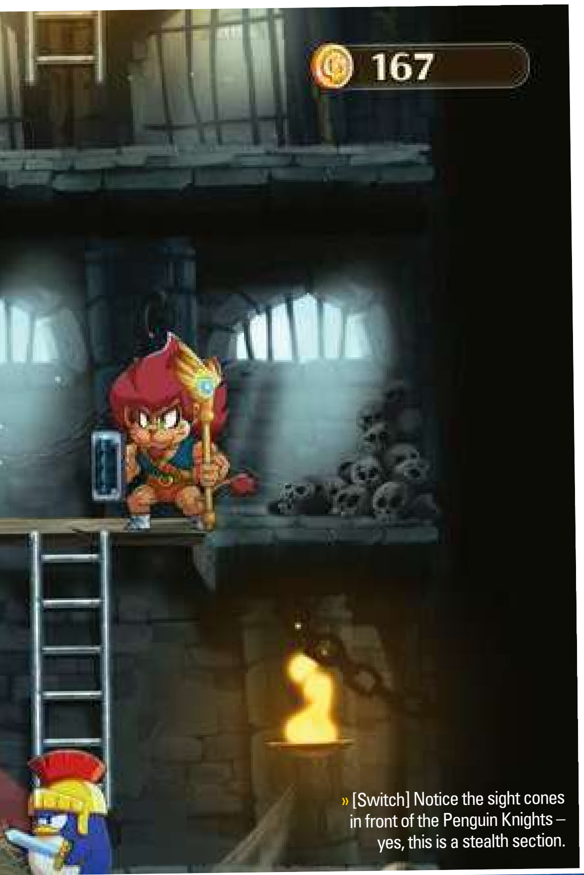
10520
HIGH 30000
LIFE
GOLD 24
GRADIUS
Let's go.
RND. 2



» [Switch] The new animal transformations in *Monster Boy* are great – who doesn't love a bomb-munching frog?



» [Switch] Tributes to past *Wonder Boy* games are a big part of *Monster Boy And The Cursed Kingdom*.



» [Switch] Notice the sight cones in front of the Penguin Knights – yes, this is a stealth section.

Nishizawa. Indeed, two other *Wonder Boy* remake projects were released before that, both in 2017 – but you'll read more on those in the Wonders Never Cease boxout.

Monster Boy follows the young boy Jin, who has to find a way to restore everyone's humanity after his uncle magically turns them into animals. *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* provides the starting point for the game design with its Metroidvania structure and animal transformations, but the game expands on that template considerably. Only the lion returns, with the rest of the animal forms all being brand-new. These include a venom-spitting snake, a frog that can use its tongue as a grappling hook, and a flying dragon. Best of all, the pig resembles his *Dragon's Trap* counterpart, eye patch and all. You can now instantly switch between animal forms and this is more than just a convenience, as plenty of the level design requires doing so deftly. It also works in equipment with unique properties like allowing you to walk on fire, and even manages to skillfully blend in sections that pick up elements of other genres such as stealth.

It's an audiovisual delight to boot – the 2D graphics are excellent and the audio includes classic themes from the series' past. Amazingly, Game Atelier managed to pull this off alone. "They were skilled enough professionals. I never made any suggestions about the game design," says Nishizawa, explaining his involvement. "I mainly supervised the background and character design. They also wanted to have the opening animation movie made by a Japanese animation studio, so I introduced them to a Japanese animation production company." The game was released on Switch, PS4, Xbox One and PC in 2018, and received positive reviews including 95% from **Retro Gamer**, 9/10 from *Nintendo Life* and 8/10 from GameSpot.

Since then, we've had more compilations and remakes, including *Wonder Boy Returns: Remix*, *Wonder Boy: Asha In Monster World* and now *Wonder Boy Collection*. It's fair to say that after many years in the wilderness, the *Wonder Boy* series has been firmly re-established in the gaming world. Why does Nishizawa think that the series was able to make that kind of a comeback? "Sometimes I hear from overseas fans about their memories of the *Wonder Boy* series, and strangely enough, in many cases, they encountered the *Wonder Boy* series when they were eight years old. I believe that 'eight years old' is the key word here," he tells us. "I imagine that the games they played as children became their 'original experiences' and that those games are etched into their memories, and even as adults, the memories of those days come back to them vividly."

The future could well be bright too. *Clockwork Aquario* has finally been released and *Wonder Boy Collection* is out now, so Nishizawa has the freedom to pursue a new *Wonder Boy* game if he likes. Thanks to his experience of working with the Game Atelier team, he just might do it too. "They have awakened a 'fever' for game development in me. But now I am more interested in developing a *Monster World* sequel than a *Monster Boy* sequel," he reveals. We can only hope that comes to pass – if a new *Wonder Boy* is on the table, we certainly won't hesitate to pick up the sword and shield one more time. ✱

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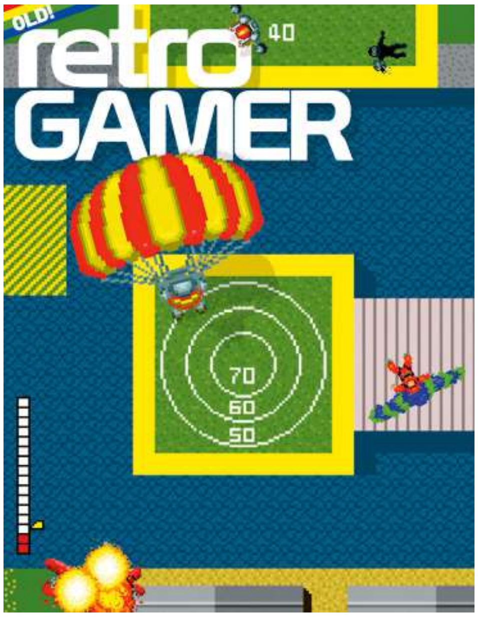
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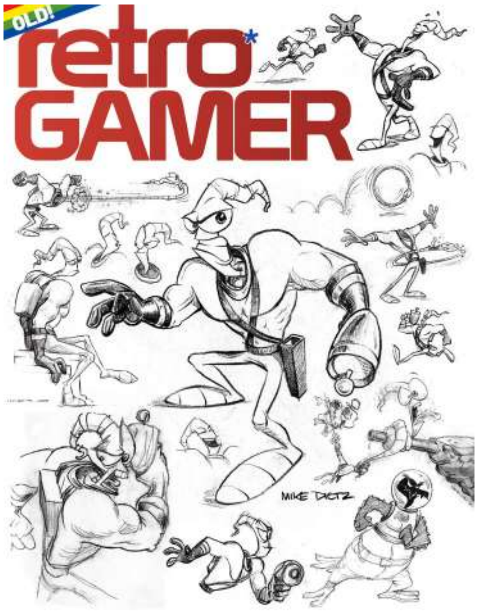
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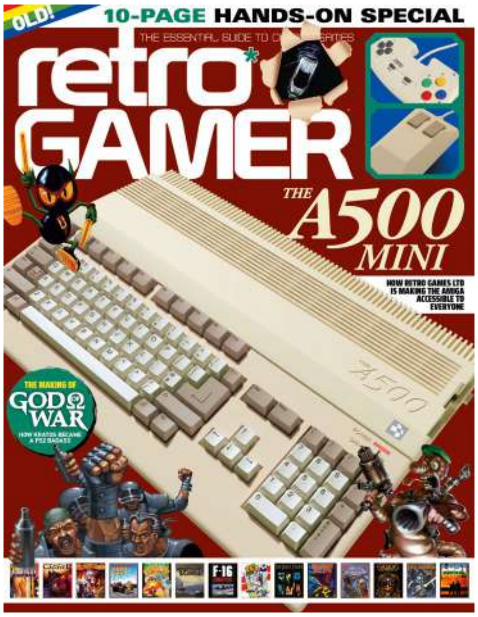
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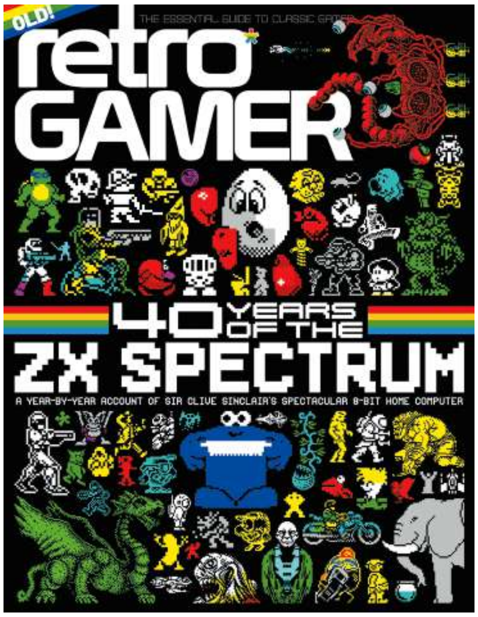
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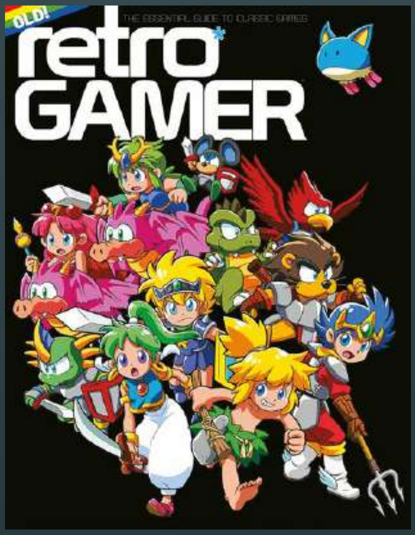

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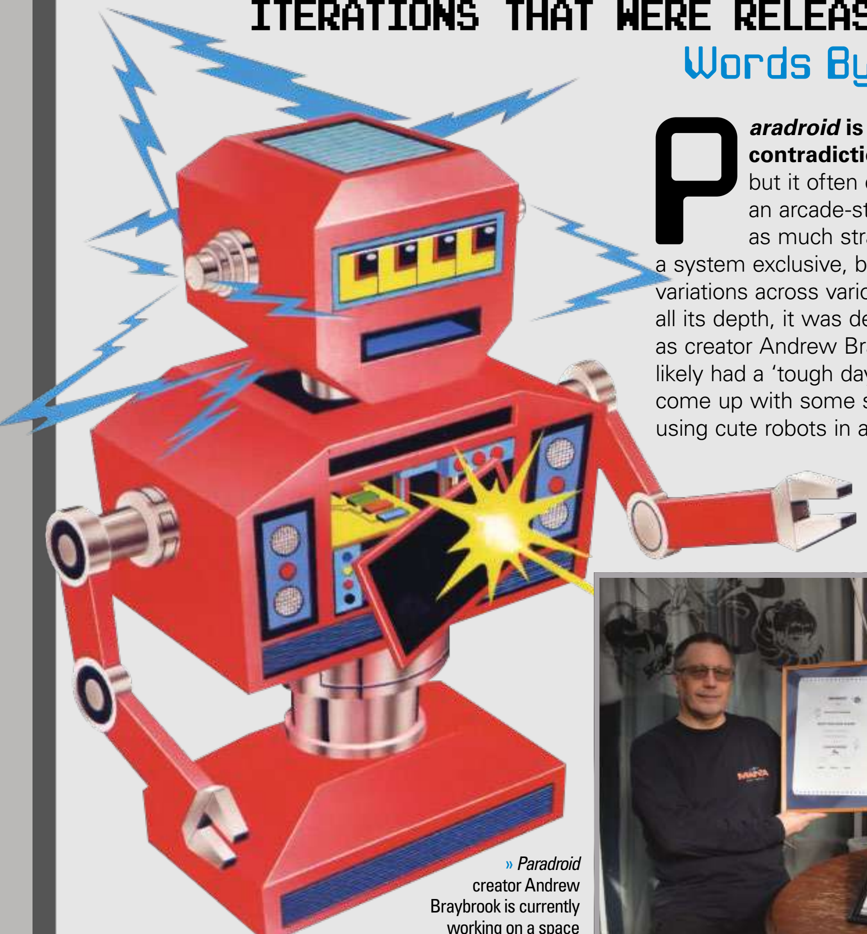
ULTIMATE GUIDE

Paradroid

BENEATH ITS SLICK PRESENTATION, GRAFTGOLD'S PARADROID IS A TEST OF SKILL, STRATEGY AND DECISION-MAKING UNDER PRESSURE. ANDREW BRAYBROOK REVIEWS HIS CEREBRAL MID-EIGHTIES SHOOTER, AND THE ITERATIONS THAT WERE RELEASED IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED

Words By Rory Milne



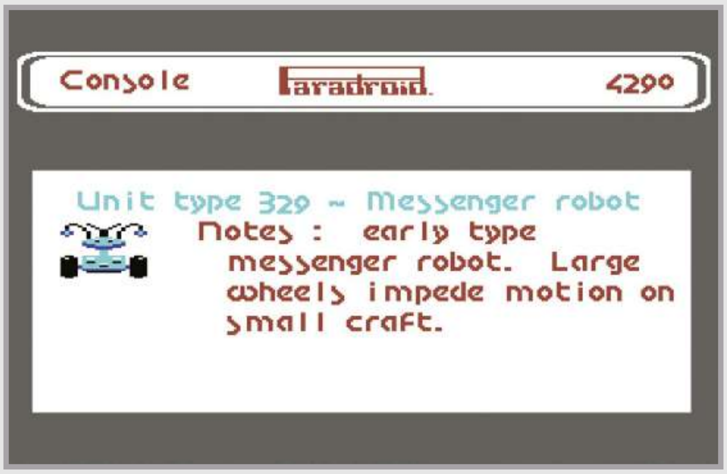
Paradroid is something of a contradiction. It's a shoot-'em-up, but it often discourages shooting. It's an arcade-style game, but it requires as much strategising as reflexes. It's a system exclusive, but there are numerous variations across various platforms. And for all its depth, it was designed in an evening, as creator Andrew Braybrook explains. "I'd likely had a 'tough day at the office', trying to come up with some sort of game scenario using cute robots in a hi-tech situation. I'd then given up," Andrew says of rejecting the brief given to him by Graftgold founder Steve Turner. "I left Steve's at 5pm as usual, and the old brain was still running at full steam. The release of the constraints of trying to merge cute and hi-tech just caused a torrent of thoughts, which I wrote down on the now infamous blue sheet when I got home. Most of the design of *Paradroid* was there."

The sheet describing *Paradroid* began, "Cute & hi-tech don't go together," and as if to emphasise this point, Andrew incorporated a sniper-like gunsight into its design. "I tried two different gunsight types," Andrew points out. "The first was inactive while the player was moving, but when you stopped, holding down fire allowed you to move the gunsight and fire instant shots at it. The issues were that it was hard to line it up with moving robots, and the player was immobile while using it, making them vulnerable. The second ran along in front of the player, moving further away the faster they moved. But with that one you had to move towards your target, which wasn't usually prudent."

With some reluctance, Andrew scrapped *Paradroid*'s gunsight, and implemented eight-way firing based on direction of travel – except when you were in 'Laser mode'. "You held the button down, and then chose when to fire and in which direction by nudging the joystick," Andrew says of the mode. "It was just a bit more sophisticated than either firing in a

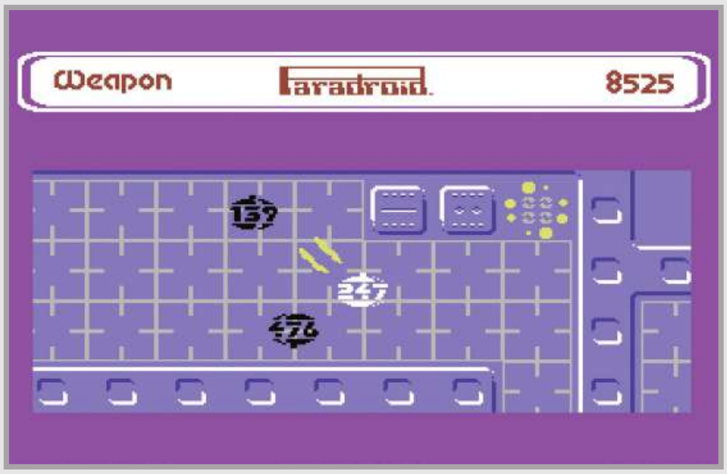
▶

» *Paradroid* creator Andrew Braybrook is currently working on a space shooter called *Astierods*.



Console Paradroid 4290

Unit type 329 - Messenger robot
Notes : early type
messenger robot. Large
wheels impede motion on
small craft.

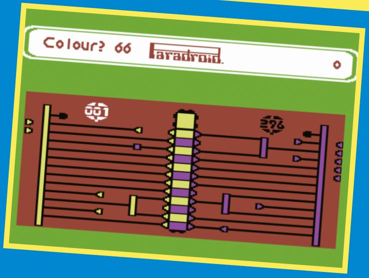


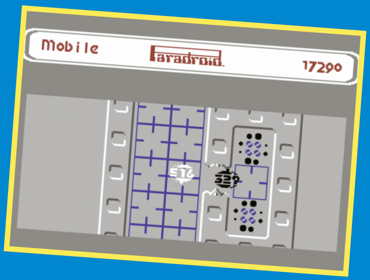
PLAYING WITH POWER

HOW TO MASTER ANDREW BRAYBROOK'S C64 CLASSIC

LEVELLING-UP

■ Upgrading is done by overloading superior droids' circuits and taking control of them. Make sure you target models that don't easily out-class you, so you're not at a major advantage, pick the side of the interface that's easiest to overload and learn how the different circuits work.



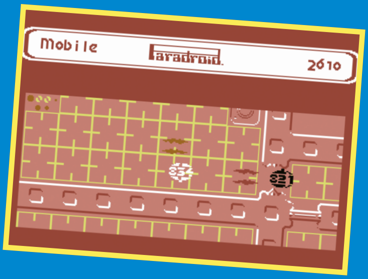


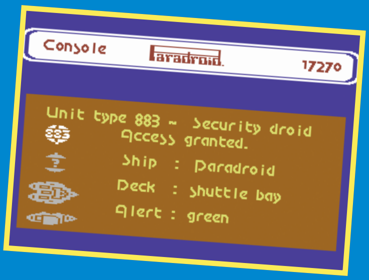
CHANGE OR CHARGE

■ The droids that you takeover in *Paradroid* only have limited power, and once that runs out you lose control of them. When this is imminent, you have three options. You can either find a charging point, return to the droid you hijacked before your current host or transfer to a new one.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

■ Much weaker foes should be dispatched to avoid the transfer game, but you're equally at risk of meeting a droid that massively outmatches you. When you do they'll try to blast you to pieces, and so the best advice is to hide behind something and then find an exit as soon as possible.





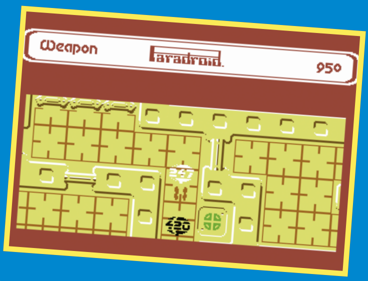
Unit type 883 - Security droid
Access granted.
Ship : Paradroid
Deck : Shuttle bay
Alert : green

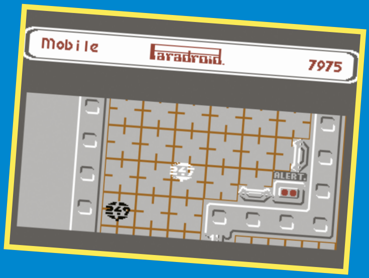
SCREEN TIME

■ There are desks with computer terminals scattered around *Paradroid*'s decks, and they have a variety of uses. As well as maps of the entire ship and the current deck, you can find out how many droids there are in the room you're in. You can also log-in to them just to pause the game!

ELEVATOR ACTION

■ *Paradroid* plays out on eight vast spaceships with decks full of rooms. Certain rooms on each deck have elevators, which move you between decks. You can do this without dispatching the droids in each one, but you need to take them all out to activate the transporter to the next ship.

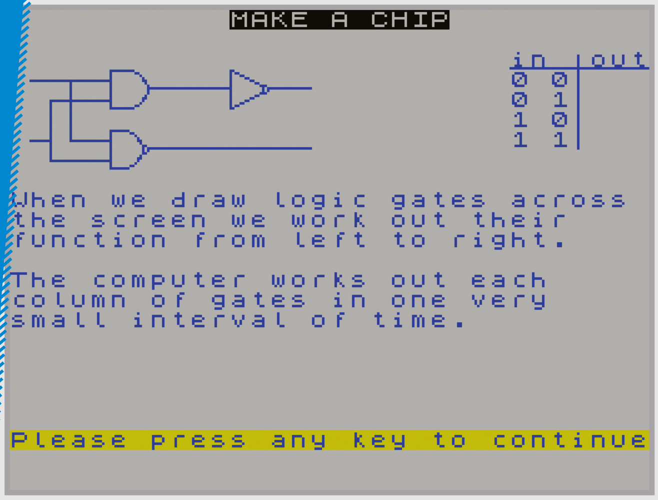




BONUS POINTS

■ As mentioned, how you dispatch *Paradroid*'s droids is up to you, but you get 500 points for each deck cleared and 2,000 for each entire ship. Rapidly wiping them out raises a green alert to yellow then amber and red – which respectively get you a 5, 10 and 25 points-per-second bonus.

> "THE RELEASE OF THE CONSTRAINTS OF TRYING TO MERGE CUTE AND HI-TECH JUST CAUSED A TORRENT OF THOUGHTS, WHICH I WROTE DOWN WHEN I GOT HOME"
>
> **Andrew Braybrook**



MAKE A CHIP

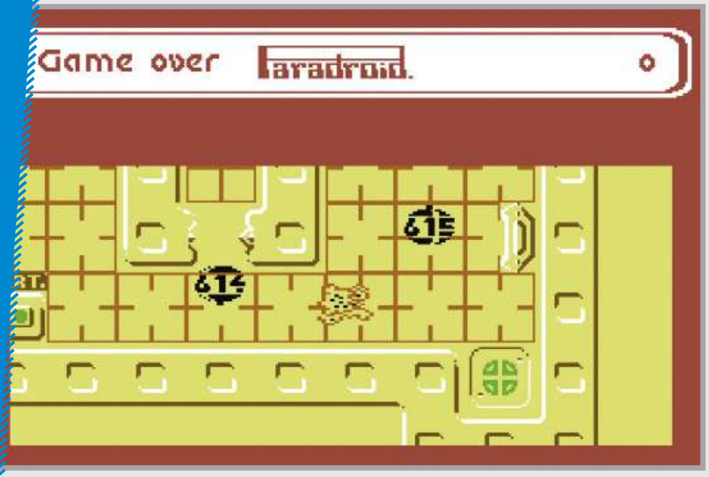
in		out
0	0	
0	1	
1	0	
1	1	

When we draw logic gates across the screen we work out their function from left to right.

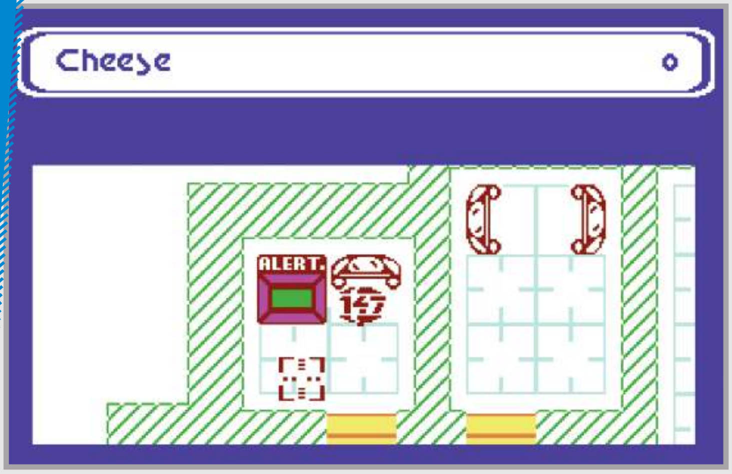
The computer works out each column of gates in one very small interval of time.

Please press any key to continue

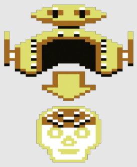
» [ZX Spectrum] A circuit design program that Graftgold's Steve Turner showed Andrew Braybrook influenced *Paradroid*'s transfer game.

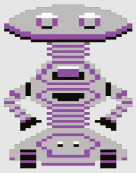


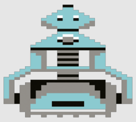
» [C64] Although the Influence Device is faster in *Paradroid Competition Edition* so are the droids!

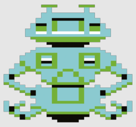


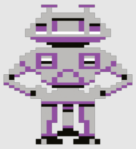
» [C64] *Paradroid* originally had a gunsight instead of firing in eight directions and 'blueprint' style walls.

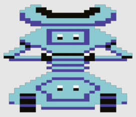

UNIT TYPE 001 INFLUENCE DEVICE

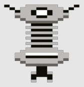

UNIT TYPE 123 DISPOSAL ROBOT

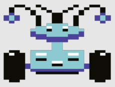

UNIT TYPE 139 DISPOSAL ROBOT

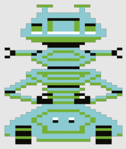

UNIT TYPE 247 SERVANT ROBOT

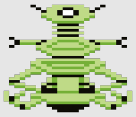

UNIT TYPE 249 SERVANT ROBOT

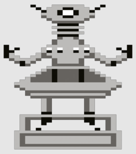

UNIT TYPE 296 SERVANT ROBOT

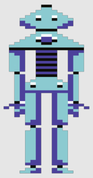

UNIT TYPE 302 MESSENGER ROBOT

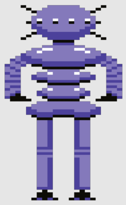

UNIT TYPE 329 MESSENGER ROBOT

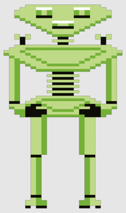

UNIT TYPE 420 MAINTENANCE ROBOT

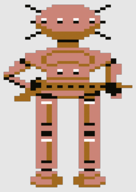

UNIT TYPE 476 MAINTENANCE ROBOT

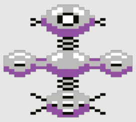

UNIT TYPE 493 MAINTENANCE ROBOT


UNIT TYPE 516 CREW DROID


UNIT TYPE 517 CREW DROID


UNIT TYPE 598 CREW DROID


UNIT TYPE 614 SENTINEL DROID


UNIT TYPE 615 SENTINEL DROID

▶ fixed direction or only in the direction you were moving, and it was perfectly valid to use it on easier droids. What stopped you using it all the time was that the little lasers didn't hurt the big droids at all. But you could fire behind you while fleeing from them, which was running away, but with dignity!"

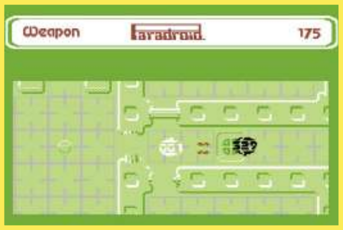
As well as swapping gunsights for lasers, Andrew also removed the flat 'blueprint' style walls he had designed for *Paradroid* in favour of ones with raised surfaces. "The diagonal lines I used were causing optical illusions, especially on the side-view of the ship," Andrew sighs. "While I was going for a sort of blueprint look, being mostly one colour features, I felt they looked too flat, and just not good enough. Once I went for the bas-relief look to make the walls 'stand up', I had to change all of the graphics to fit in with that style – I couldn't have half of it looking 3D and the other half flat."

Another aspect of *Paradroid* was more curious – 'Cheese mode' – which reflected the fact that the game repurposed code Andrew had written for his previous game. "That was a left over from *Gribbly's Day Out*," Andrew grins. "In its pause mode, I wanted to leave Gribbly and the character animations moving. I therefore invented 'Cheese mode', which stopped all the animations so that a photo could be taken. Gribbly used to face the screen and smile too! Do people still say 'say cheese' when about to take a picture?"

More critical to *Paradroid* was a droid-transfer sub-game, which took inspiration from circuit design software that Steve Turner suggested Andrew base a logic puzzle on. "The circuit diagrams gave me the idea to use different components to connect to a central bar from

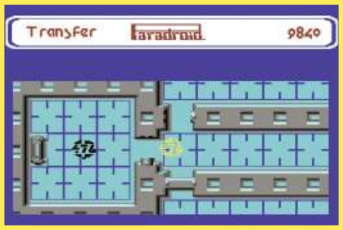
UPGRADE PATH

HOW ANDREW BRAYBROOK AND OTHERS ENHANCED HIS HIT GAME



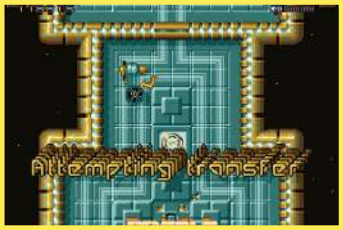
PARADROID COMPETITION EDITION

■ Released with *Uridium Plus* in time for Christmas 1986, *Paradroid Competition Edition* was promoted as an 'Ultra-smooth mega-fast version'. Unlike *Uridium Plus*, *Competition Edition* doesn't add new gameplay or levels, but it does make *Paradroid* seem really slow!



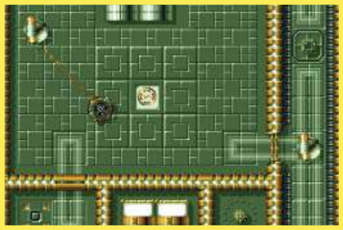
HEAVY METAL PARADROID

■ Created by Andrew Braybrook in order to evaluate whether the new graphical style he had created for *Morpheus* would work, *Heavy Metal Paradroid* has more solid-looking hull graphics than its predecessors. It's just as fast as *Competition Edition* too.



PARADROID 90

■ Not quite a sequel in the true sense, *Paradroid 90* adapts and expands the original for the Amiga and ST. As well as improved aesthetics, pirates and a secret ship unlocked by collecting Graftgold keys, *Paradroid 90* differs from the original in that its stages only scroll vertically.



PARADROID 2000

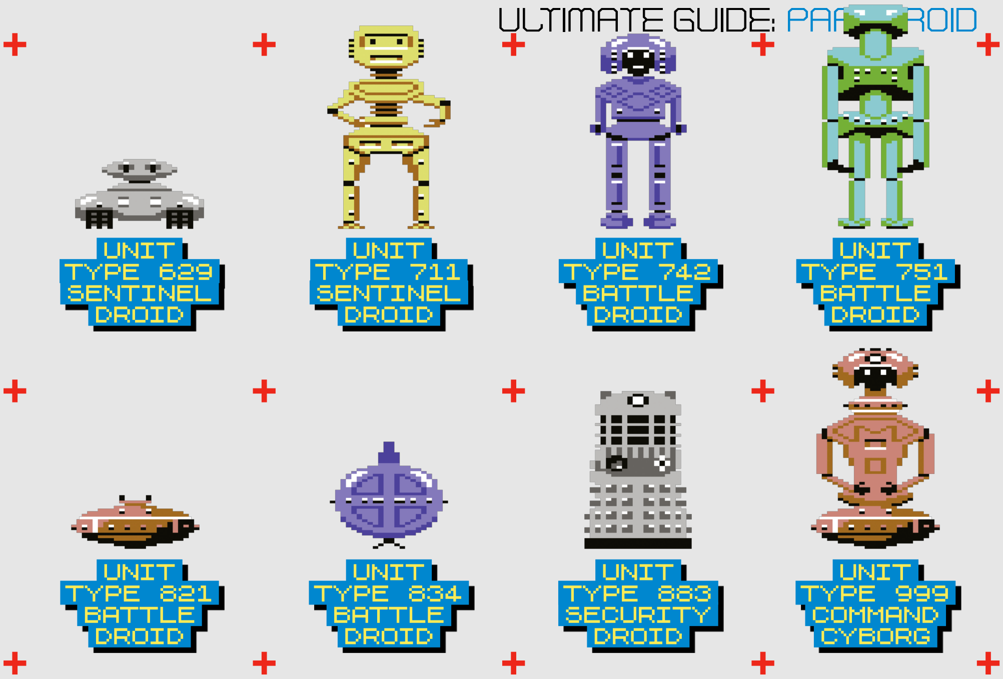
■ Licensed to Coin-Age Ltd, *Paradroid 2000* is essentially *Paradroid 90* rendered in a slightly higher resolution with a slightly different colour palette. It also has its own unique visual effects, and an undocumented option of choosing which level you start on.

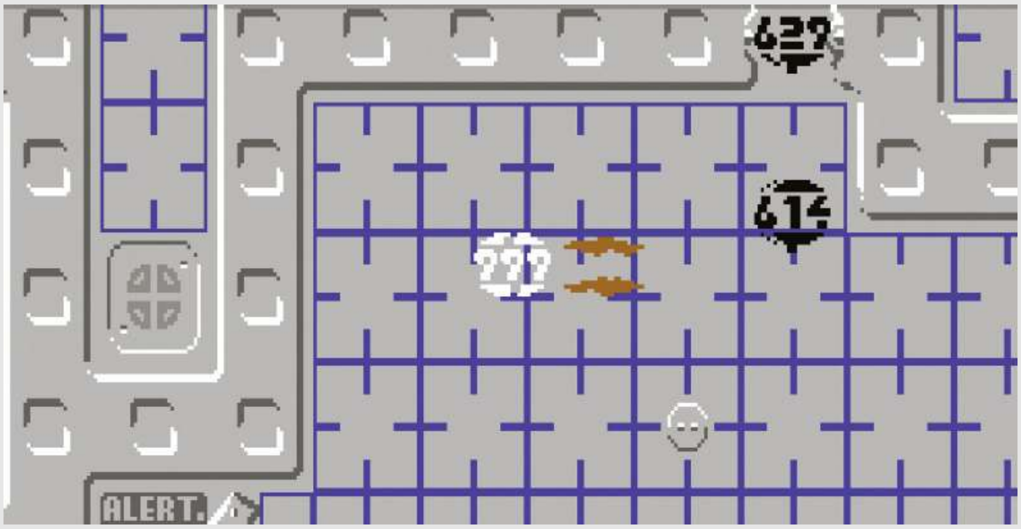
> “THE CIRCUIT DIAGRAMS GAVE ME THE IDEA TO USE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS TO CONNECT TO A CENTRAL BAR FROM EACH SIDE, AND TO HAVE TWO SIDES FIGHT FOR CONTROL”
>
> **Andrew Braybrook**

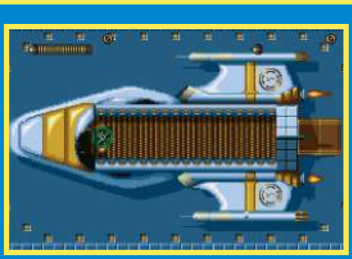
each side, and to have two sides fight for control of the robot’s brain circuits,” Andrew notes. “It was a more immediate and simplified idea than solving an electrical problem with components. Although one side could be a lot better, so you could choose which to play.”

You might imagine the praise heaped on *Paradroid* on its release would leave Andrew content with his work, but instead he decided to look at how he could improve it. “I must have been tinkering and decided to take out two of the ‘wait for vertical blank’ calls,” Andrew recalls. “I was as surprised as anyone that the game happily ran at 25 frames per second. I don’t believe I re-tuned any speeds to run the game objects a bit slower; I just called it the *Competition Edition*.”

Released the following year, *Competition Edition* became the must-own version, but by then Andrew had created a third variant to test a metallic look for his latest project. “I was experimenting with a graphics style for *Morpheus*, but I didn’t yet have the full game in which to put it,” Andrew remembers. “So I decided to build a set of graphics with the new look by doing a one-for-one character substitution into the *Paradroid* graphics set. It worked so nicely that it became my go-to version, and so it seemed worth releasing.” ▶


UNIT TYPE 629 SENTINEL DROID
UNIT TYPE 711 SENTINEL DROID
UNIT TYPE 742 BATTLE DROID
UNIT TYPE 751 BATTLE DROID
UNIT TYPE 821 BATTLE DROID
UNIT TYPE 834 BATTLE DROID
UNIT TYPE 883 SECURITY DROID
UNIT TYPE 999 COMMAND CYBORG





PARADROID (PC ENGINE)

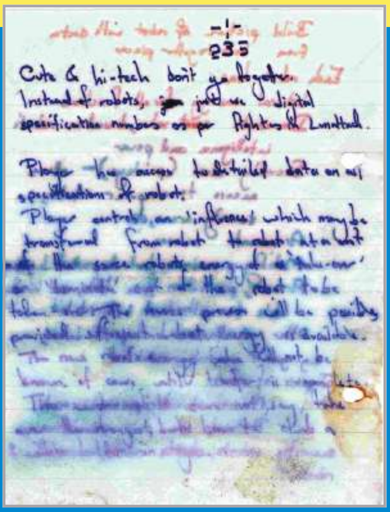
■ Work on the PC Engine *Paradroid* was completed, but due to complications relating to the collapse of Hewson Consultants it never saw the light of day. Although similar to *Paradroid 90*, the console version has a different transfer game and a two-player co-op mode.

PARADROID (GBA)

■ The original was all about its gameplay, and the GBA update replicates that almost exactly. You have to rotate some droids left and right to get their lasers firing in the direction of travel, and transfer deadlocks send you back to the main game, but otherwise it plays identically.

PARADROID 3

It’s uncertain how much work was done on the GBA title *Paradroid 3*, but there was a promo video that suggested what it might have been like. As well as bringing back the original game’s gunsight, it shows the player in charge of a diminutive spider-like Influence Device.



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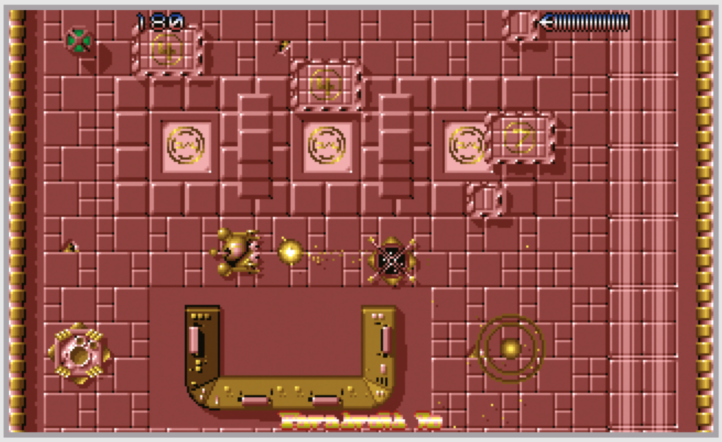
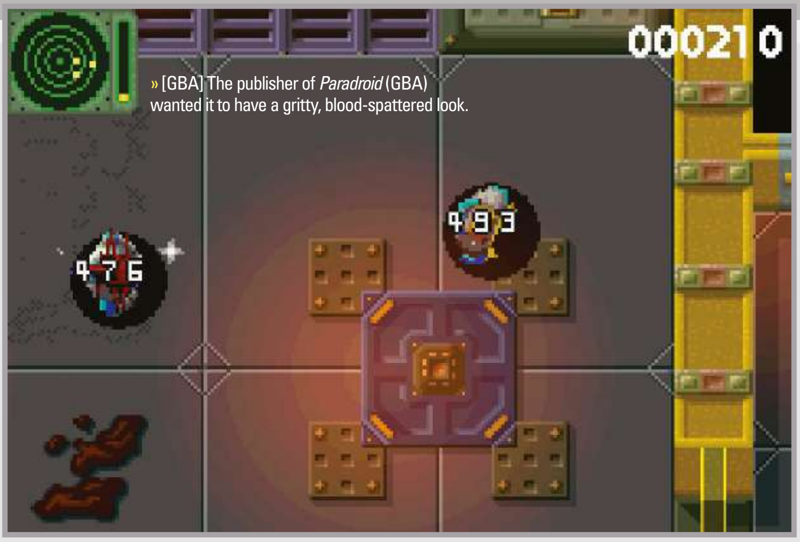
Cute & hi-tech don't go together.
Instead of robots, just use digital specification numbers as per Fighters Ltd Limited.

Player has access to detailed data on all specifications of robots.
Player controls an 'influence' which may be transferred from robot to robot

» The design document for *Paradroid* was written in just a single evening.



» [Amiga] Although it plays very similarly to the original game, *Paradroid 90* has nicer visuals.



» [GBA] The publisher of *Paradroid* (GBA) wanted it to have a gritty, blood-spattered look.

DEVELOPER Q&A

JOHN MCMURRAY

ON HIS UNRELEASED, RECENTLY LEAKED GBA PARADROID

Were you a fan of the original *Paradroid* before developing *Paradroid* for GBA?

To be fair, I held *Paradroid* in even higher esteem than *Uridium*. I think it was more of a 'game'. The sub-game alone in *Paradroid* was just marvellous. There was that initial strategic decision of which side to take, and then the actual game was just brilliant.

What was the story behind the new look created for GBA *Paradroid*?

We had creative differences on *Paradroid* to a certain extent. Col Rogers was the project manager at Jester Interactive, and I don't think he liked me very much. That's when we were arguing about *Paradroid*. I was saying I wanted it to look more like the original, and he was saying what Jester wanted was gore.

How did this decision affect the game's visuals?

There were blood stains on the floor, and the levels were all dirty and grimy. Jester also made us change the look of the first robot – the Influence Device – into an alien crawling around the floors, which isn't what you think of when you think of *Paradroid*. The funny thing is, when you remember the Influence Device, the 001 almost looked like it had eyes. That made it look like a strange sort of character, I thought, but Jester wanted to make it look edgy.

Why did Jester take this approach?

I think it was pitching it towards what it thought was a youth market, as opposed to what it probably should have been doing, which was selling it to 30-somethings. But the thing is that it was Jester's money, and it paid us to make it. So I've no complaints about that.

In what other ways did the GBA version of *Paradroid* differ from Andrew Braybrook's original game?

It needed a memory save, because the ships were pretty big, and I think there were nine of them or something like that. So to play through it in one go was a bit much.

What did you do when Jester ran out of money?

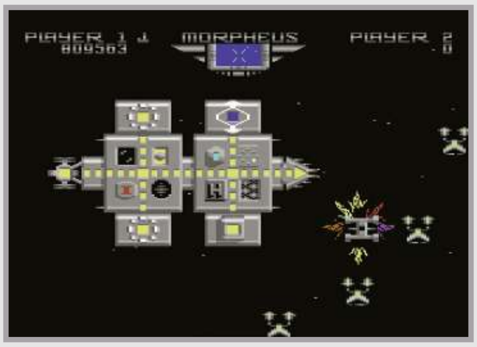
I pretty much finished GBA *Paradroid* in Germany, and that was the end of my career in videogames. I started looking at having a family, and I found that the other work I started doing was quite interesting. But the game was sort of finished, and it passed Nintendo certification.

Do you still play your version of *Paradroid* from time to time?

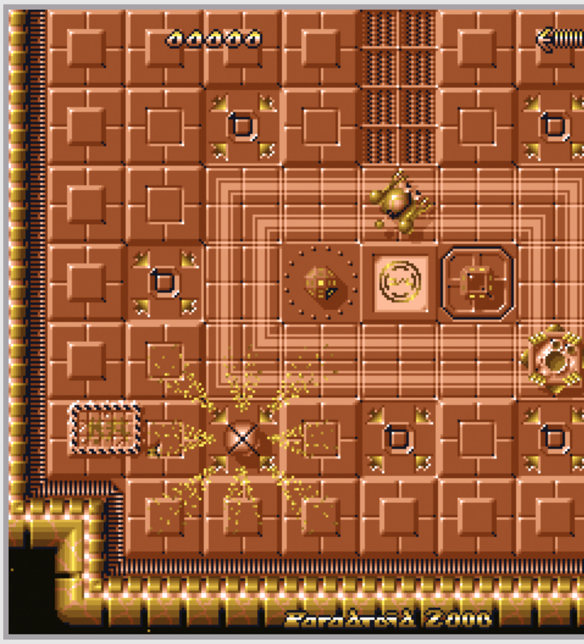
I don't have it anymore because my wife pulled a plug when we were moving back to England. We were packing, and she pulled a plug, and she somehow managed to fry both of my backup disks and my DT disk at the same time.

What can you say about the cancelled FPS *Paradroid 3*?

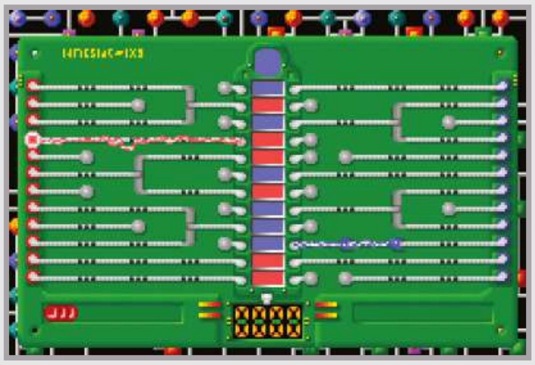
We were pushing a 3D *Paradroid* for a while. I think it did have a 3D engine; you could do 3D on a Game Boy Advance, but basically you would have just been trying to sell a tech demo. Because it wasn't *designed* to do 3D graphics.

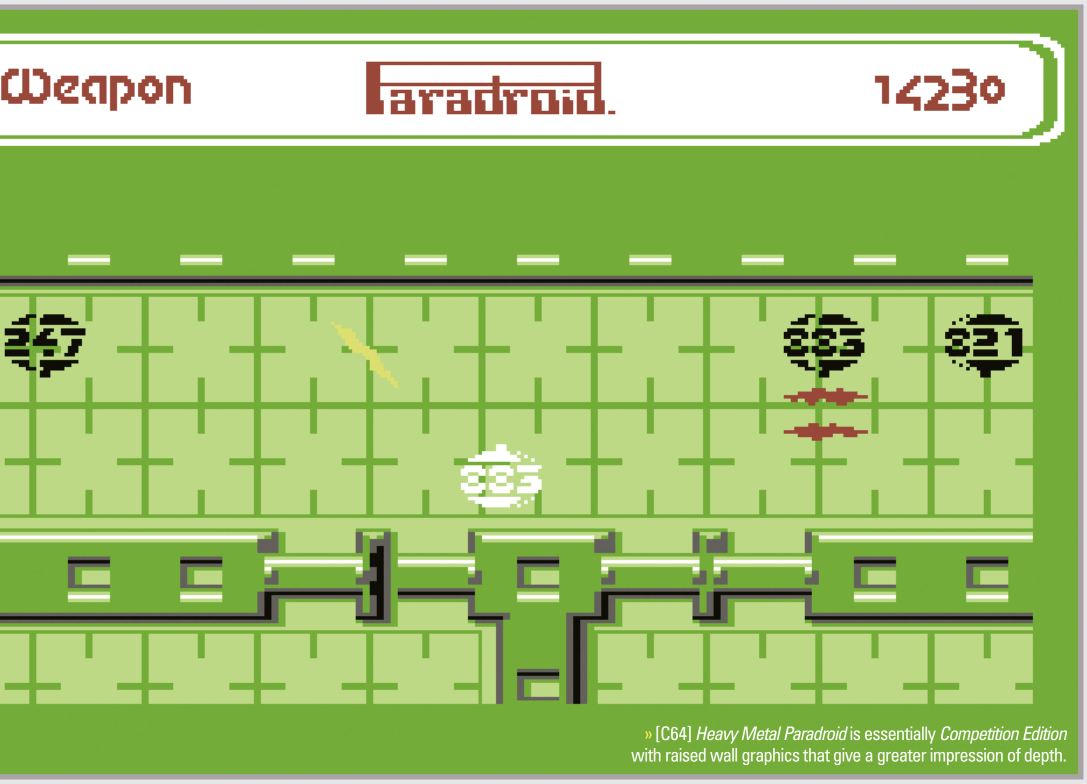


» [C64] Before making *Morpheus*, Andrew Braybrook perfected his raised visuals concept with *Heavy Metal Paradroid*.



» [Archimedes] *Paradroid 2000* is best described as a higher-resolution, differently coloured *Paradroid 90* with alternate effects.





» [C64] *Heavy Metal Paradroid* is essentially *Competition Edition* with raised wall graphics that give a greater impression of depth.

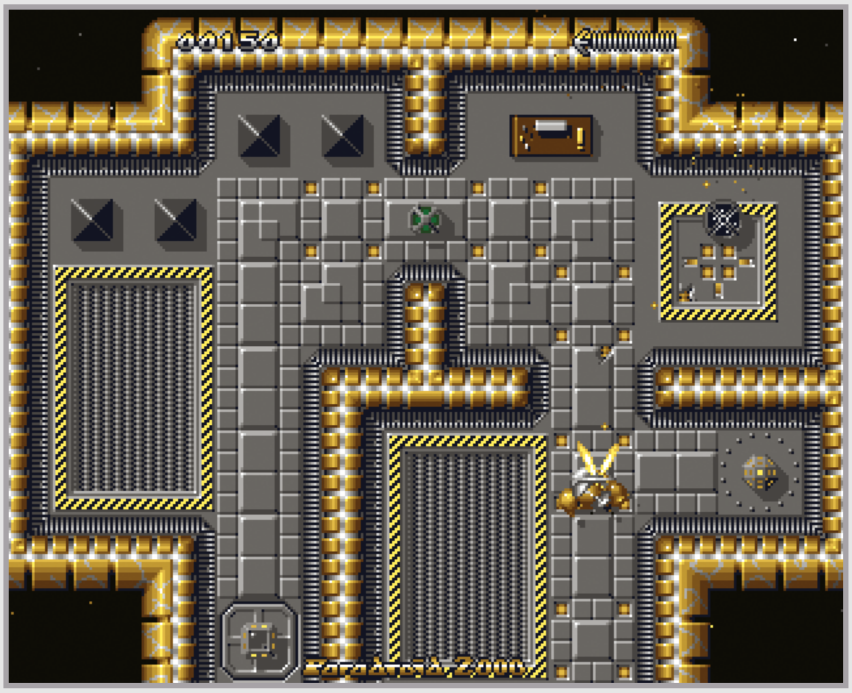
> "I WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE BACKGROUND GRAPHICS OF ALIEN BREED ON THE AMIGA, AND THE GBA PARADROID DOES HAVE SOME OF THAT"
> Andrew Braybrook

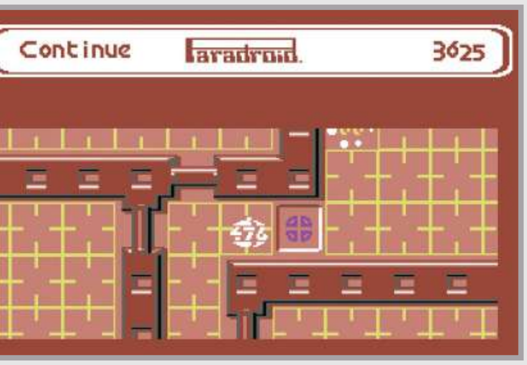
This re-styled iteration – *Heavy Metal Paradroid* – hit shop shelves 18 months later, by which time Andrew had a 16-bit vertically scrolling take on his 8-bit classic ready. "Many of the robots in *Paradroid 90* only fired their weapons in the direction they were facing, as it would have looked odd with the bullets not coming out of their guns," Andrew reasons. "I came up with six new ship layouts, plus I recreated the original's, and I made the transfer game AI quite smart by comparison to *Paradroid*'s, in that it evaluated every firing position and fired at the most beneficial ones."

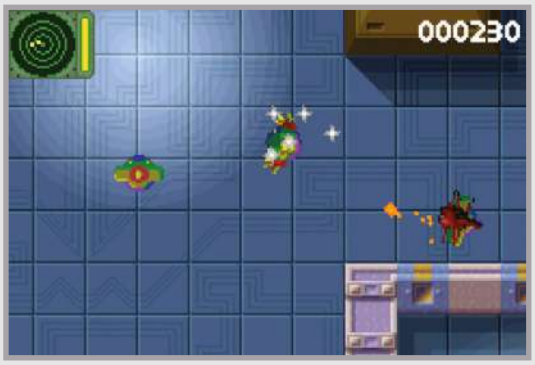
A licensed Acorn Archimedes conversion called *Paradroid 2000* followed, and although Andrew didn't consult on it, he was pretty much satisfied with the end result. "The graphics looked identical to *Paradroid 90*'s, making me think that they used the 16-colour mode rather than the 256-colour mode," Andrew assesses. "It seemed they also got all the code converted pretty accurately, although I did note that I couldn't see the shadows on the destructible crates."

Although developed back in 2002, an unreleased GBA version of *Paradroid* has only just now seen the light of day, allowing Andrew to finally cast his eye over it. "The ships seem more spacious, maybe their developer re-factored the blocks," Andrew considers. "I was very impressed with the background graphics of *Alien Breed* on the Amiga, and the GBA *Paradroid* does have some of that. I don't like all of its graphics, but it's a technical improvement on my limited 8-bit ones, and probably my shiny 16-bit ones."

An unrelated project – *Paradroid 3* – was being produced by the same publisher, Jester Interactive, but unlike its predecessor it had a first-person perspective. "Steve and I visited Jester's office to see the first-person version one time. It was quite early days," Andrew recollects as he concludes his review of the *Paradroid* titles. "But having later seen *Quake*, I think *Paradroid* would work in 3D in first-person perspective, although I'm concerned about how difficult accurate firing would be, and you'd have to be able to turn around pretty fast!" ✱







Total Eclipse

A LASTING IMPRESSION

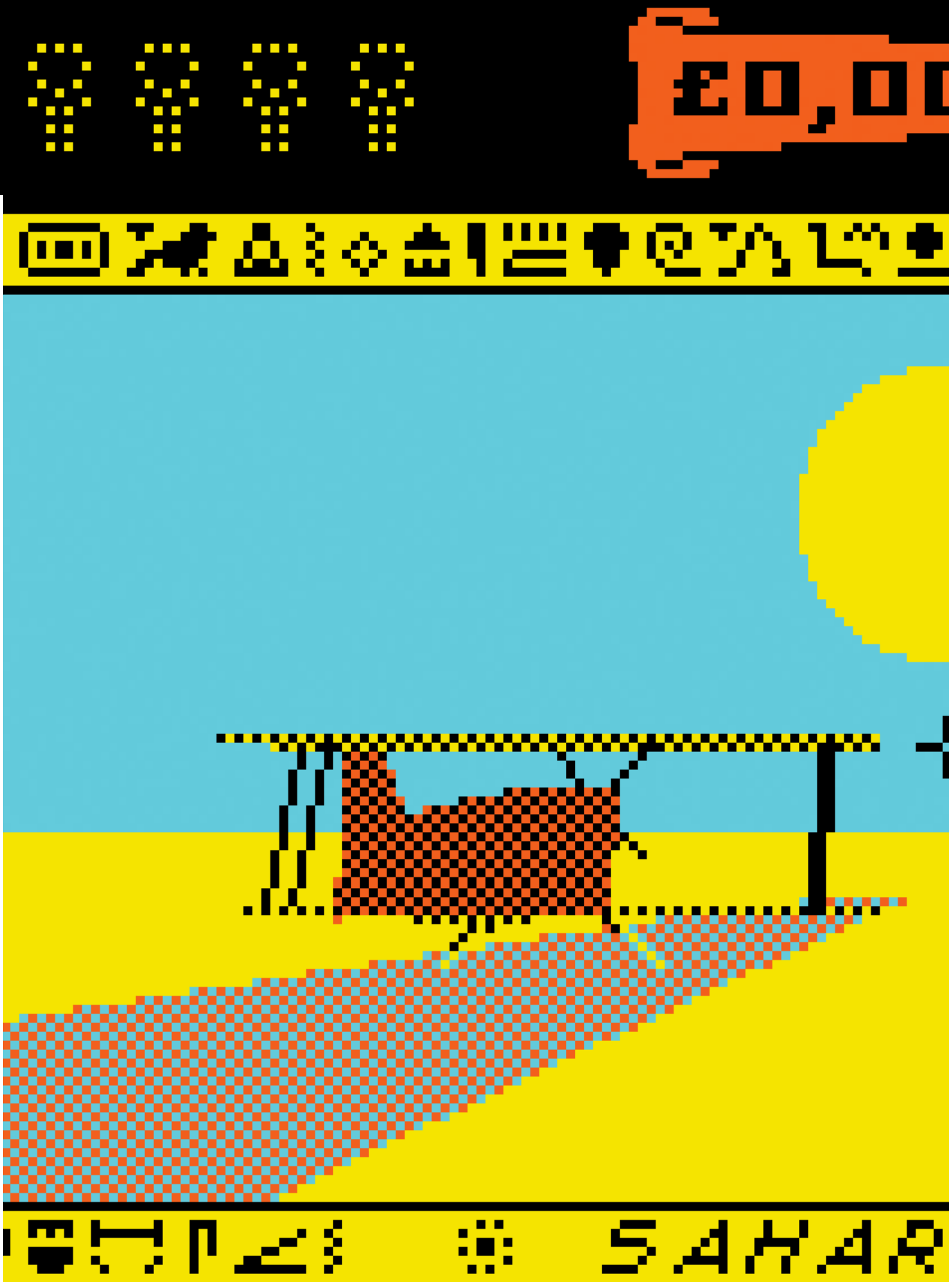
» AMSTRAD CPC » 1988
» MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

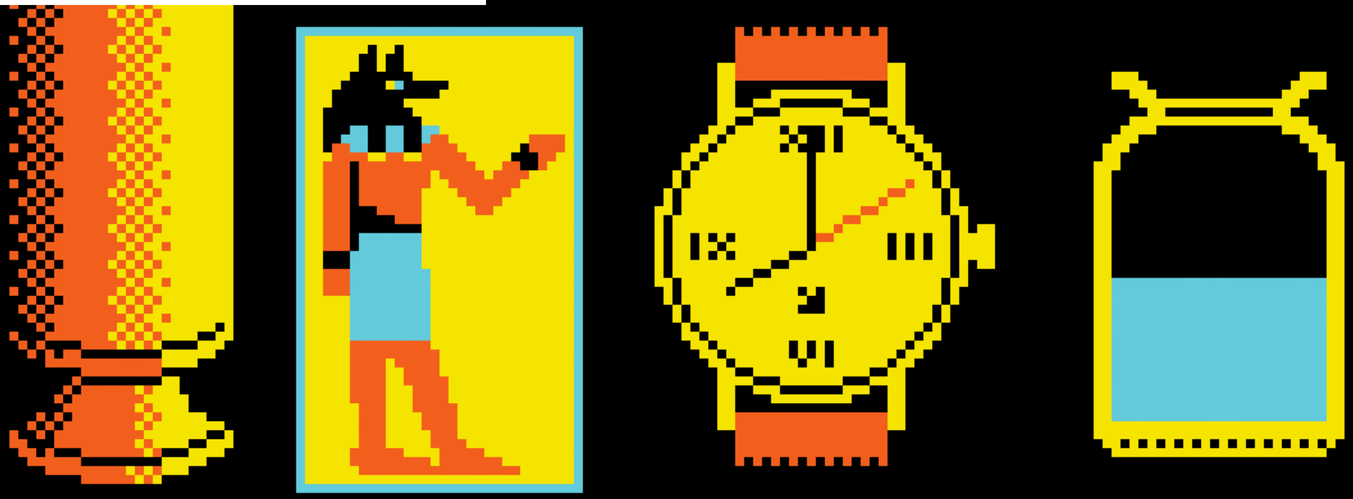
One of the things I used to love about Major Developments' Freescape games growing up was their sheer ambition. Yes they were hampered by ridiculously sluggish framerates and yes they probably should have avoided the 8-bit systems entirely for their more powerful 16-bit cousins but it was hard to fault the aspirations each game had.

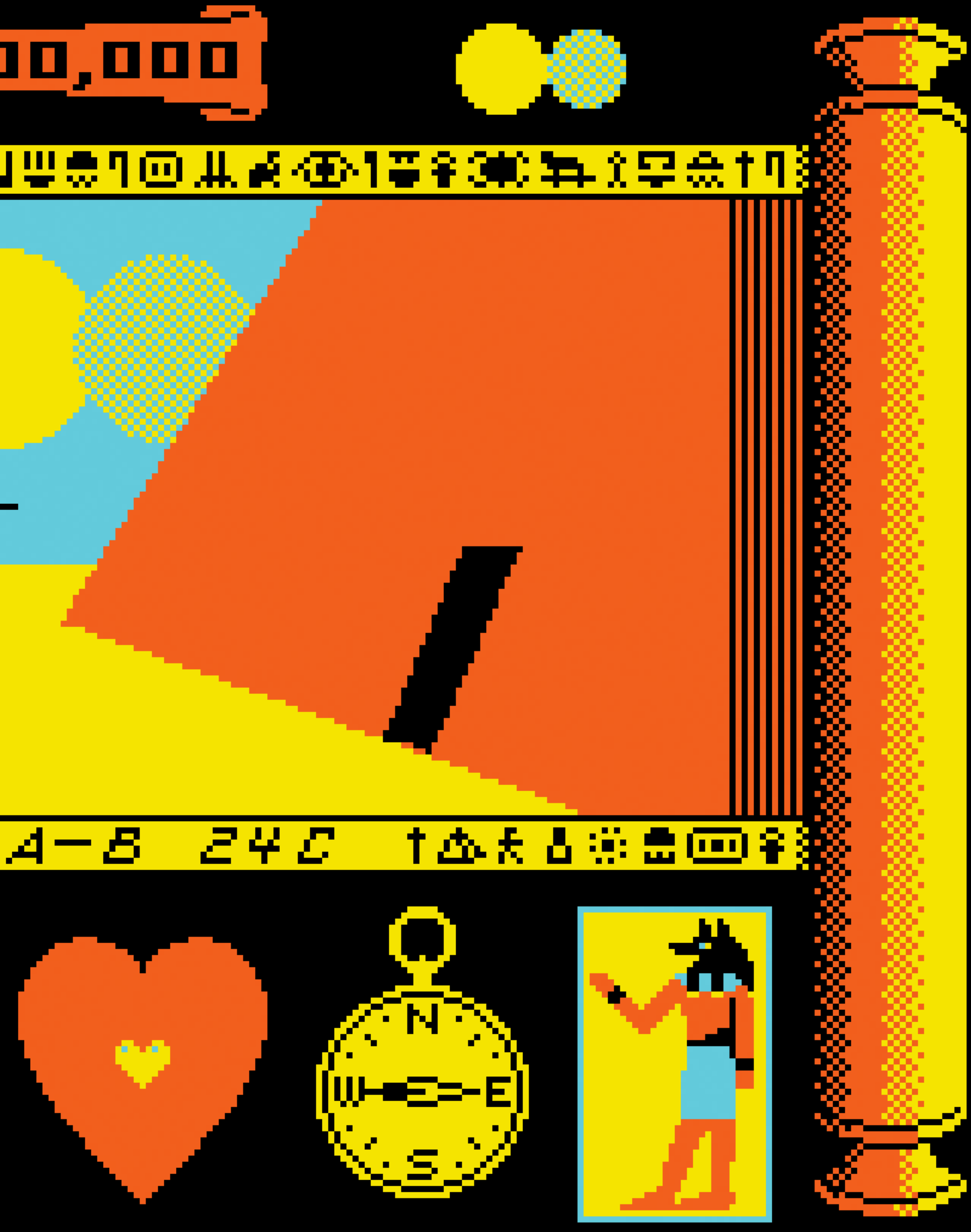
While I bounced hard off *Driller* and its follow-up *Dark Side*, *Total Eclipse* had me tremendously excited. Early previews in *Amstrad Action* suggested that the Egyptian-themed game was more in liking with my own interests and the eventual high-scoring review suggested that it not only had lots of clever puzzles in it but that many of the things I hadn't enjoyed in *Driller* had been ironed out or improved.

It took ten weeks of saving my £1 pocket money to finally afford my own copy of *Total Eclipse*, but it was certainly worth the wait. Everything about *Total Eclipse* made it feel special, from its lavish box to its striking colour palette and neat presentation. I loved movies like *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* and even trash like *King Solomon's Mines* so the thought of exploring ancient tombs and monuments was too good an opportunity to pass up.

I was never able to complete *Total Eclipse* because my gaming forte is more geared towards shooting things than it is to problem-solving, but it has always left an impression on me. For me, this opening shot with your biplane parked next to an imposing pyramid was an image that promised no end of adventure if you were brave enough to venture inside and solve its secrets. It's unlikely that I'll ever get to revisit *Total Eclipse*, or its sequel *The Sphinx Jinx* but I'll never forget the excitement Major Developments' game generated for me at the time. It really felt as special as it looked. *



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CD-ROM

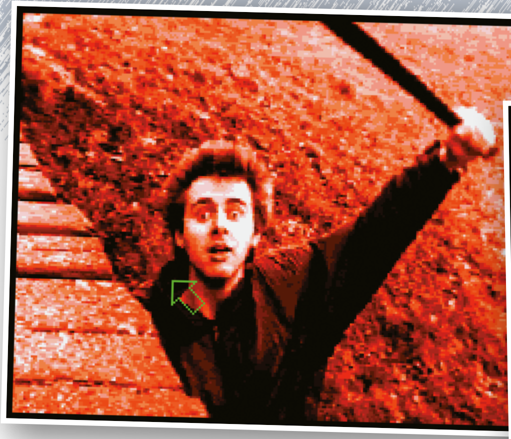
THE EARLY YEARS

SINCE THE EARLY DAYS OF FLOPPIES AND CARTRIDGES, ART HAD TO BE COMPRESSED, MUSIC WAS CUT, A LOVE STORY HAD TO FIT IN EIGHT LINES OF TEXT. THE CD-ROM CHANGED ALL THAT FOR ON-LINE ENTERTAINMENT AND LATER DEVELOPERS

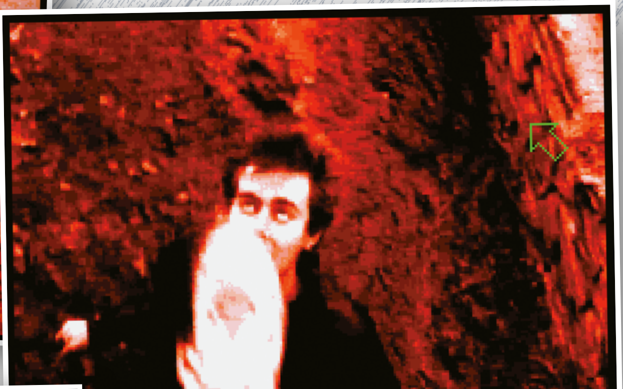
WORDS BY DAMIANO GERLI

» Clem Chambers set up On-Line Entertainment to take advantage of CD-Rom.

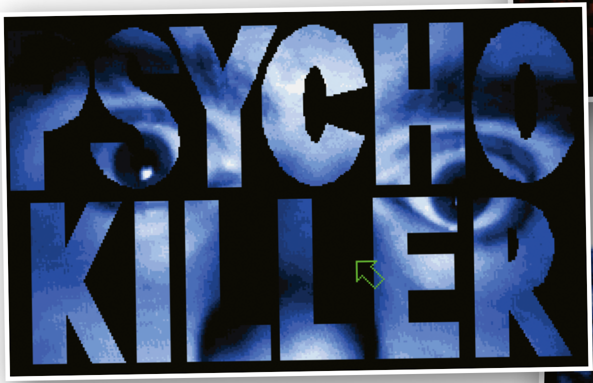
» John Chasey worked on early CD-ROM-based games like *Psycho Killer* and *Cyberwar.*



» [CDTV] Charlie Watts features as the killer in *Psycho Killer.*



» [CDTV] "Eat my Reebok!" (yes that's an actual quote).



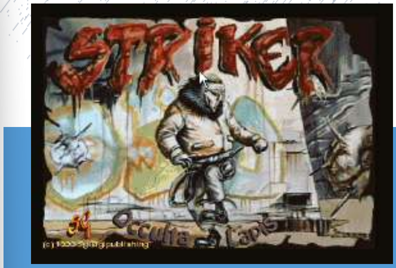
The introduction of the 'silver disc', for an industry where many publishers were scared to even consider printing a game on two separate floppy disks, can truly be considered a revolution. Developers found themselves, from having to work with sizes of around 10-20MBs, to having almost 60 times that. But, it was a revolution that no one really seemed to be quite prepared for. Suddenly the problem became: what should be done with all that extra space? Computers and consoles did not really jump in processing power, they just had more 'space' to use.

In the early Nineties, the solution seemed pretty clear: make the player interact with digitised movie sequences and images. Indeed, interactive movies soon set themselves apart as the new genre of the future, with CD-ROMs gradually being adopted as the standard media by consoles like the Philips CD-i and the 'media system' Commodore CDTV. Some of the very early experiments in interactive movies actually came from the United Kingdom, where a small team, On-Line Entertainment, was the first to develop a system purposefully made to easily create FMV games. But where did the company come from?

CRL (Computer Rentals Limited) was an English software developer and publisher, which began as an actual computer renting company, hence the name. CRL was founded in the early Eighties by then 18-year-old Clement Chambers. "I was an intelligent young boy, but I was pretty bad at exams so, instead of persevering with school, I decided to go into business with a computer game company thanks to the money given by my father. There was no way I would get into publishing console games, the home-computer market was definitely more exciting, especially the Commodore 64," Clem remembers. After starting up the company with little money, in 1982, Clem went about renting the cheapest London office he could find, on Vallance Road in Whitechapel. It was in a building that was slightly titled, after a bomb had blown the rear off it during World War II. "After I started publishing games, I was but a small dot on the horizon, we ran the company with the best and cheapest drugs one could find: caffeine and tobacco," Clem says.

The company managed to thrive for the whole decade, publishing games such as *I-Alien* and Rod Pike's controversial *Dracula*. It was the arrival of the Amiga on the market that made Clem realise that things were about to get serious. "I realised I needed more than one 14-year-old developer to make a decent game for the 16-bit machine. My hobby at the time was watching my competitors going bust, like what happened with Imagine. As for us, we got much further than others, and it was because I suddenly realised the potential of this new medium: the CD-ROM." By the ▶

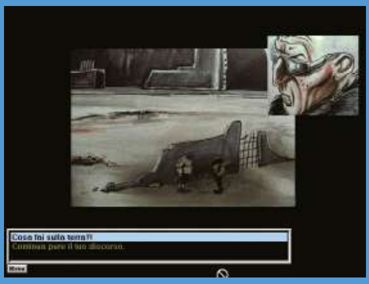
> "WE RAN THE COMPANY WITH THE BEST AND CHEAPEST DRUGS ONE COULD FIND: CAFFEINE AND TOBACCO"
> CLEM CHAMBERS



STRIKER: OCCULTA LAPIS

INSIDE THE FIRST INTERACTIVE COMIC BOOK MADE IN ITALY

■ Developed by three young brothers from Palermo, *Striker: Occulta Lapis* was the first interactive comic book developed in Italy. A cyberpunk tale influenced by artists like Moebius, it saw Striker, a futuristic punk rebel, in a fight against evil aliens. After breaking out of prison, he is on a mission to free himself and the whole human race, with a spiked baseball bat as his only weapon. While the project started as a simple digital comic book, soon hotspots and choices in the dialogue were added to make the experience more engaging for the player. Characters were dubbed by local voice actors, which makes *Striker* also one of the earliest games to be dubbed in the country. It used a rich soundtrack with Iron Maiden and Pink Floyd, which was entirely unlicensed, since the young kids believed that as long as they paid the rights to publish the game on CD, they were free to feature any music they'd like. In 1993, after finding a publisher, *Striker* was distributed in a few copies, before the company tore up the contract, leaving the developers with little choice than to hugely lower the price in order to sell the remaining ones. In the end, *Striker* sold poorly and the brothers moved on to develop interactive collections of photographs.



Cosa fai sulla terra?!
Continua pure il tuo discorso.

THE COMMODORE CDTV

REVISITING THE FIRST COMPUTER WITH A CD-ROM READER

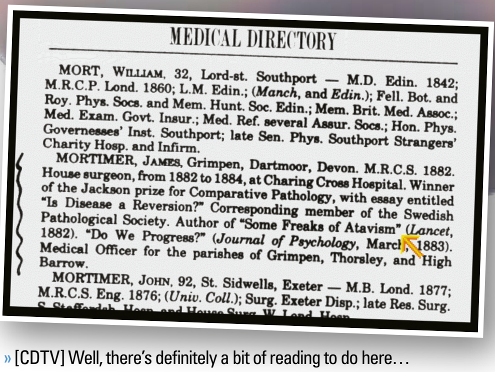
■ The CDTV, introduced in March of 1991, was the first CD-based experiment by Commodore in the consumer business. Basically it was an Amiga 500 with a CD-ROM reader designed to be directly plugged into the TV, sold without keyboard and mouse, but with a remote controller. The system had apparently been in development since the late-Eighties, going through different transformations, and the man at the helm of the project was none other than former Atari CEO Nolan Bushnell. The company wanted a direct competitor for the Philips CD-i, a 'media appliance', rather than a console, that could be used both for entertainment and education purposes. It debuted on the market with a price of $999, a high price that made little sense for previous Amiga owners, since Commodore would later release a stand-alone CD-ROM reader for Amiga systems as well. Because of poor developer support and even worse marketing by Commodore, the system died a quick death and, by 1993, it had already been replaced by its successor: the Amiga CD32. Historically, since it was really an Amiga 500 at its core, it can be considered the first computer to be sold on the market with a CD-ROM reader.

▶ early Nineties, *The Times* ran an article on the potential of CD-ROMs and CRL took notice, being among the first companies to get in on the business. By 1991, Clem had created a new company, On-Line Entertainment, which made a deal with Commodore to supply the first games for its brand-new CD-based system: the CDTV. "I remember that when we went to the city to raise money for the company: no one seemed to be interested, apparently because they had no clue what on-line even meant. They thought it was something their secretaries would do," Clem says.

The deal with Commodore was to release five games to coincide with the launch of the new system. Despite studios promising to release what would end up being simple updated versions of games already available on Amiga, like Cinemaware's *Defender Of The Crown*, many ended up being delayed. "Commodore provided us with a couple of dev kits and that was it," continues Clem. "Among all the studios which promised to deliver games for launch day, we were the only ones who actually did, so they were forced to strongly market our games. It was either our games or nothing, I think they hated us!"

» [CDTV] It's not five o'clock, but still time for tea.

"THE BUDGET FOR THESE EARLY FMV EXPERIMENTS? ZERO"
CLEM CHAMBERS



MEDICAL DIRECTORY

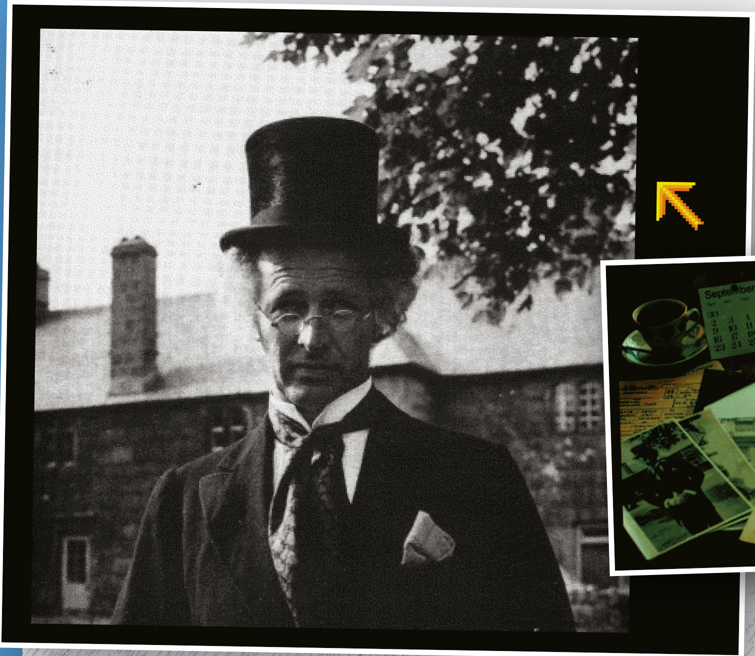
MORT, William, 32, Lord-st. Southport — M.D. Edin. 1842; M.R.C.P. Lond. 1860; L.M. Edin.; (*Manch*, and *Edin*.); Fell. Bot. and Roy. Phys. Socs. and Mem. Hunt. Soc. Edin.; Mem. Brit. Med. Assoc.; Med. Exam. Govt. Insur.; Med. Ref. several Assur. Socs.; Hon. Phys. Governesses' Inst. Southport; late Sen. Phys. Southport Strangers' Charity Hosp. and Infirm.

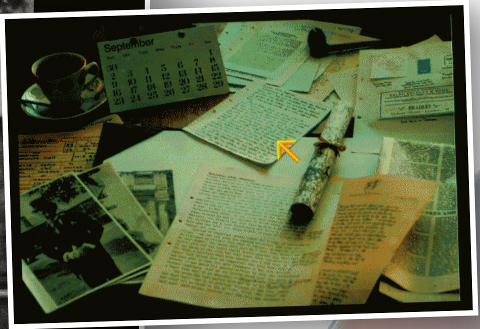
MORTIMER, James, Grimpen, Dartmoor, Devon. M.R.C.S. 1882. House surgeon, from 1882 to 1884, at Charing Cross Hospital. Winner of the Jackson prize for Comparative Pathology, with essay entitled "Is Disease a Reversion?" Corresponding member of the Swedish Pathological Society. Author of "Some Freaks of Atavism" (*Lancet*, 1882). "Do We Progress?" (*Journal of Psychology*, March, 1883). Medical Officer for the parishes of Grimpen, Thorsley, and High Barrow.

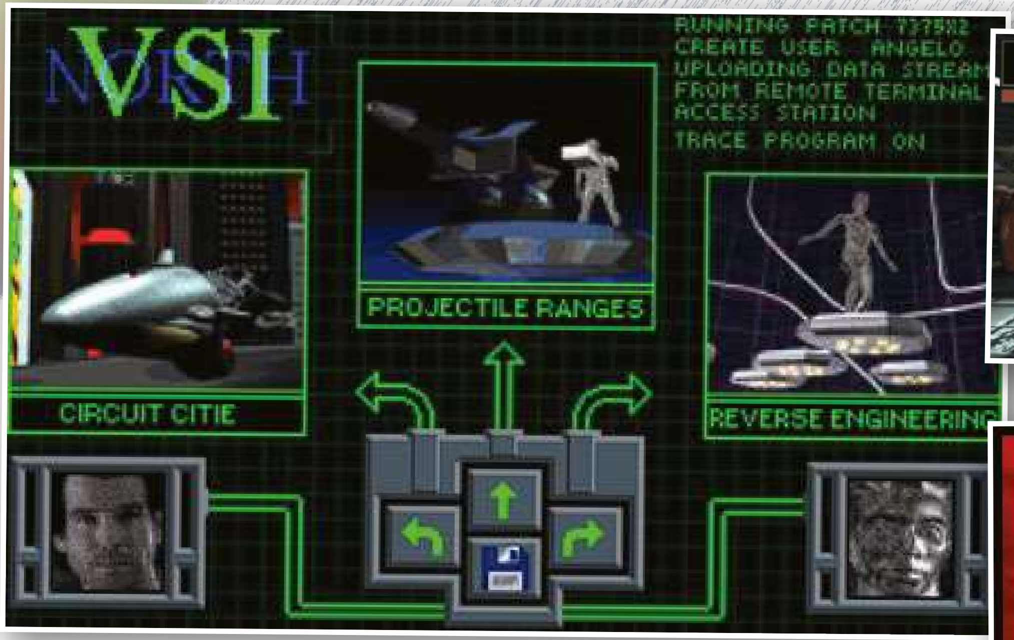
MORTIMER, John, 92, St. Sidwells, Exeter — M.B. Lond. 1877; M.R.C.S. Eng. 1876; (*Univ. Coll.*); Surg. Exeter Disp.; late Res. Surg.

» [CDTV] Well, there's definitely a bit of reading to do here…

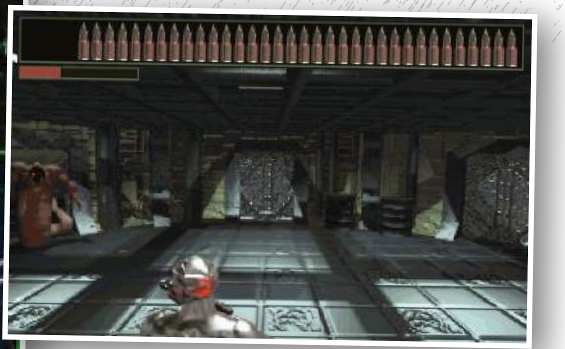
Among the developers of these first CD-ROM-based ideas were John Chasey and Fergus McNeill. "Clem was my very introduction into the business, we met on the Compunet network during the Amiga days," remembers John. The programmer would start developing what was originally known as EGADS, then switch names to DUNE. (Developers Universal Non-programming Environment). "The idea came from Clem, as CRL had previously published a number of adventure games written with The Quill, software that allowed 'non-programmers' to create games by focusing on the content rather than the coding," John says. This new environment allowed creators to author a program with a lot of graphical content, without needing to learn machine code or C (which was what most of DUNE was written in). "In hindsight, DUNE worked quite similarly







» [PC] *Cyberwar* allows the player to choose which levels to play first.



» [PC] Be sure to shoot the aliens coming through the door.

to early WWW, although back then I'd never seen the web as most online systems were text-based," John says. "You could create pages composed of graphics and text and create hyperlinks on text of graphic elements and have them take you off to different places. There was an ability to do logic tests on a set of variables to track the player's progress and branch accordingly. This was all done with a UI rather than written code. Then instead of pulling the next page from the internet, it was loaded from CD-ROM."

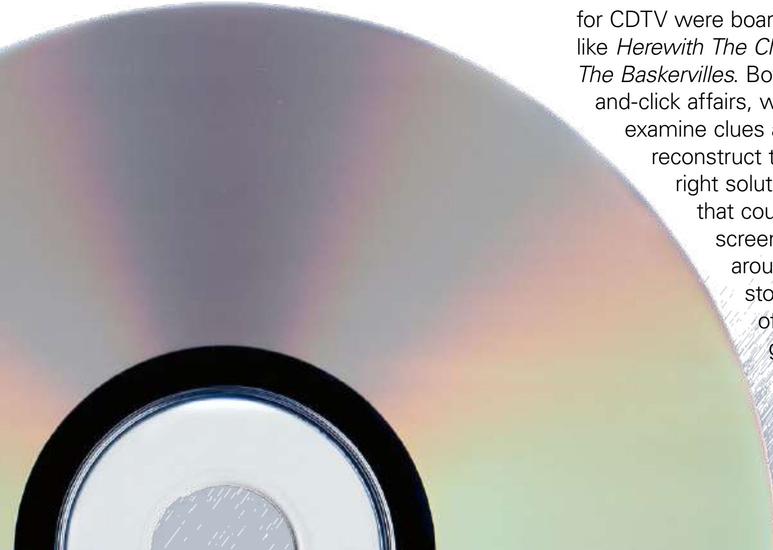
The system would bring to life the early FMV games released by On-Line Entertainment on CDTV like *Psycho Killer*, an original idea by Fergus McNeill. The adventure would see the player trying to stop a serial killer in a park: a simple point-and-click, mostly made with still digitised images and short movie sequences. "To my knowledge, *Psycho Killer* in 1992 was the first multimedia CD ever released," Clem comments. "The budget for these early experiments? Zero. I never believed in the idea of the interactive movie, one would need millions to make a decent interactive example of the genre, and no one had the money to do them. For *Psycho Killer* Fergus borrowed his machete, but at least he owned the camera, so he ran around the park wielding both to shoot the necessary footage. Good thing we didn't have to bail him out of jail!" John confirms, saying, "For most of the games it was myself on a student wage and I believe Fergus was working freelance, he'd be getting a royalty based on future sales. That was the extent of our budget."

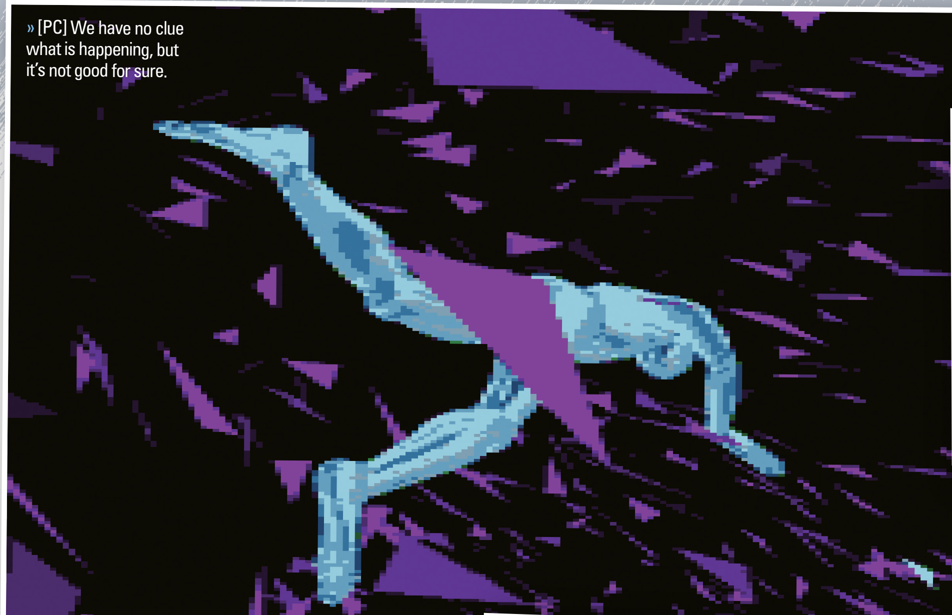
As for its successor, *The Town With No Name*, also released for CDTV in 1993, Fergus improved the technology by using a rotoscoping technique for the characters and polygonal graphics for the buildings. It delivered a cartoonish animated tale with good doses of humour. "Clearly, the game was far from perfect, we were the first to do that kind of product. Still, I am not one to go in front of a cave painting to complain that it doesn't look realistic enough!" laughs Clem. The adventure is indeed recognised as being among the worst games to be released in the Nineties, to which Clem comments, "People have no sense of irony and fun along with little imagination, if they can't see the obvious ten-foot signpost of humour. At the time, I don't think we ever got one complaint from the players of the game."

Other titles released with the DUNE systems for CDTV were board game adaptations like *Herewith The Clues* and *The Hound Of The Baskervilles*. Both were simple point-and-click affairs, where the player had to examine clues and documents in order to reconstruct the story and arrive at the right solution. Interactive experiences that could be easily played on a TV screen by pointing and clicking around. "Since the plot and story already existed, most of the work [for these two games] was in creating good-quality digitised images from the material, which, as much as it might sound simple, wasn't straightforward at all back then!" explains John. "The images were digitised with a black-and-white camera with colour filters, so as to grab different shades and then combine back into a colour image."

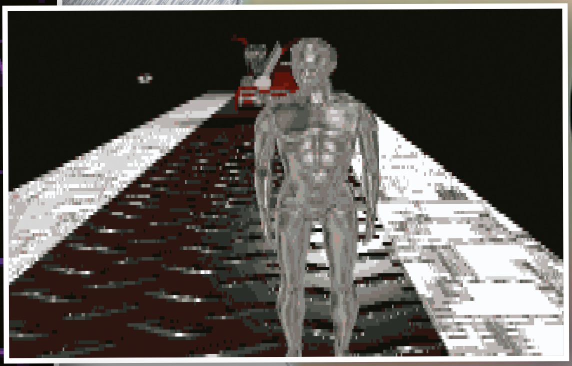
Following these experiments, On-Line Entertainment would strike a deal to develop the tie-in game from the 1993 sci-fi movie *The Lawnmower Man*. Glenn Broadway, among the developers of the game, says, "I had previously worked at Images, then in 1993 I started working at SCi. The new studio was opening in Southampton and four artists and animators were hired to work on *The Lawnmower Man*. The development was a joint venture, with On-Line Entertainment providing the game engine and technical input, along with the game's designer and producer, Fergus McNeill."

Despite being developed for both MS-DOS and Mega-CD, the tool that was being used to develop the gameplay mechanics was still the very same DUNE environment, which ran on Amiga. John remembers it could have been potentially interesting to convert it ▶





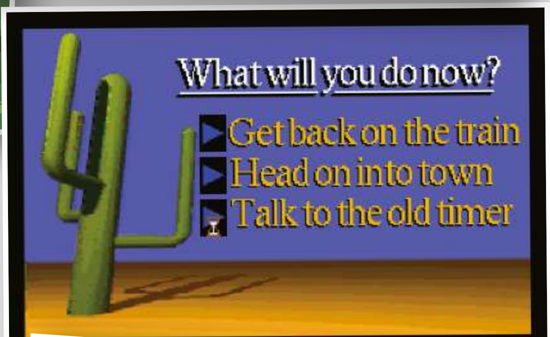
» [PC] We have no clue what is happening, but it's not good for sure.



ACCESSING CYBERJOBE MEMORY BANKS

KILL COMPLETE

» [PC] No game based on *The Lawnmower Man* would be complete without a huge lawnmower chasing you.

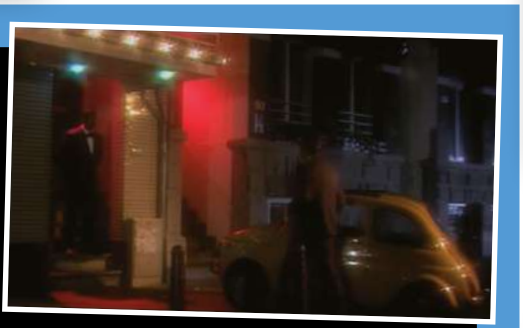


What will you do now?

- Get back on the train
- Head on into town
- Talk to the old timer

FMVS GO DUTCH

MEET THE NETHERLANDS FILM STUDENT THAT DABBLED WITH FMV



■ In the mid-Nineties, the Amsterdam film school started hosting a class about interactive media. Among the students of said class was Melcher Hillmann, who got so fascinated by the potential of this new interactivity with film that he got the idea of making an interactive movie. His third-year assignment for school would end up being *De Zaak van Sam* (*Sam's Case*), which he mentions writing while strictly following the adventure game rules: the player needs to collect items before progressing through the story.

Melcher remembers a fascination with the *Dick Tracy* film and wanting to do something along those lines. The movie was selected at Cannes for 'young interactive talent' and got the attention of Philips, which paid a small sum of money to publish it for CD-i in both the Netherlands and the UK, in 1996. Melcher would also make one more interactive movie, *Dossier Desirée*, in 1997: a detective story. This time the gameplay was simplified, with the player going after certain suspects in order to follow the one they think is the culprit. Despite being published for Windows PCs, Melcher mentions *Dossier Desirée* as having little success, since many people did not have a computer with the necessary requirements to run the game.

The only thing I needed now was my gun. But where was it?

for PC, but that was something that the company never seemed to be interested in, Clem mentions an intention to sell it to other companies but never finding the right time to do so.

The licensed tie-in game featured limited interactive puzzles or quick time events linked together with FMV cutscenes which, while looking primitive today, were quite impressive for the time. "We used 3D Studio on PC to create and render the 3D graphics sequences," Glenn continues. "I also did a fair amount of touch up on the digitised footage. I think the colour palette was reduced dramatically to something like eight colours, and every frame had to be edited by hand to remove noise and dithering." John remembers getting the original CGI footage used for the movie, "We discovered that it had all appeared in the movie, the budget was such that they didn't waste a second of it when doing the final edit."

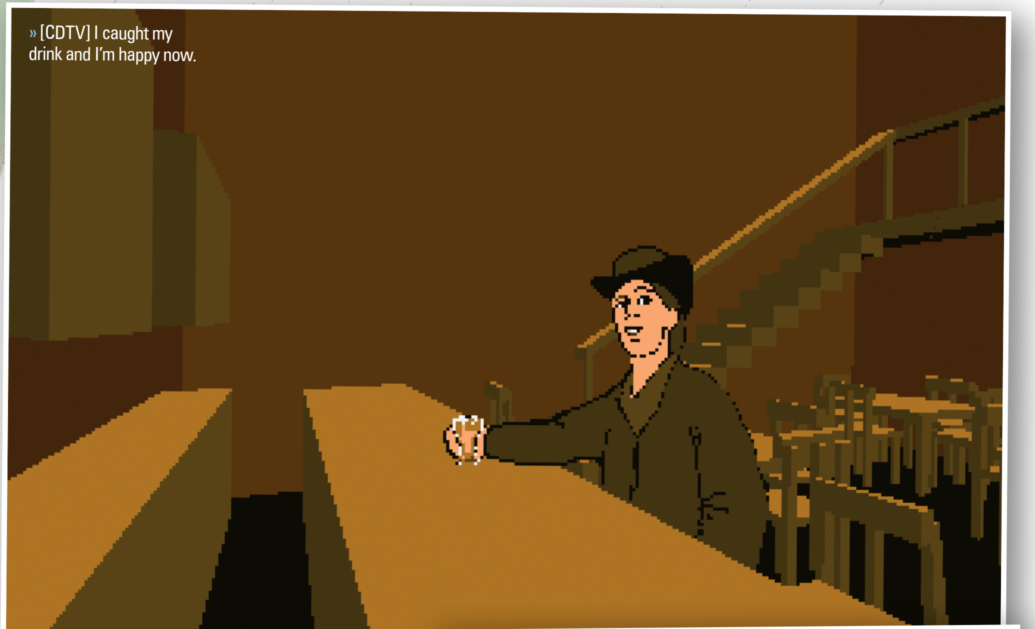
Clem remembers that when SCi got the licence from the movie, the team wanted to do something spectacular. "We were the only team capable of providing an already developed solution for such a game, but I should have been more careful. Working on a game for a publisher means that, regardless if you do a good job or a bad one, they're probably going to run you out of business."

"WE USED 3D STUDIO ON PC TO CREATE AND RENDER THE 3D GRAPHICS SEQUENCES"
GLENN BROADWAY

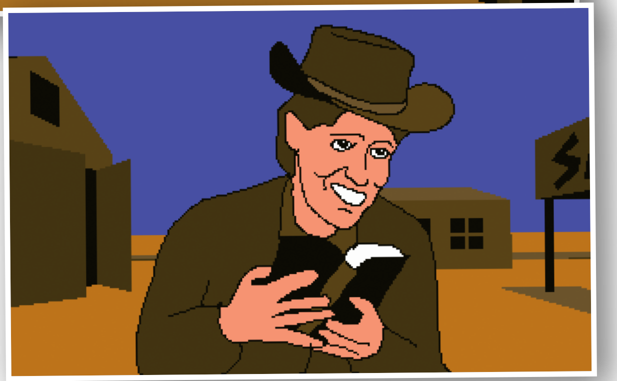
A direct sequel to *The Lawnmower Man* called *Cyberwar* was planned, which was also developed by SCi. Despite a sequel to the movie entering production right away to cash in on the success of the original, it would hit delays and wouldn't be released until 1997. In the end, SCi was instructed to go ahead and create its own kind of game sequel to the movie, which interestingly enough seems to follow what happens at the end of the original movie, ignoring the original cliffhanger ending in *The Lawnmower Man* game. "The technology was still quite basic, but it worked," Glenn comments. "We streamed video from CD-ROM at very low speeds and at times there would be more than one stream. So, many times, the video ended up being reduced in size even further." John adds, "To get around the slow loading times, I came up with a solution (CDXML) that interweaved different streams within a single file, effectively alternating frames from different videos. So, when played back, the player's decisions were shown with no delay."

Cyberwar does not differ much from the original game: it is again a collection of minigames with FMV sequences that link them all together. There is more of an emphasis on action and the team took a few more liberties with the original material, especially since the game did not have anything in common, story-wise, with the actual movie sequel. As *Cyberwar* uses the same DUNE environment and 3D sequences, it feels a 'more of the same' type of sequel. Glenn remembers problems especially with the still-primitive tech, "The Philips CD drive we had for burning test discs was incredibly temperamental and would easily fail even if someone walked past it too quickly whilst it was burning. Each of the discs was well over £50 so it was an expensive process when it kept going wrong."

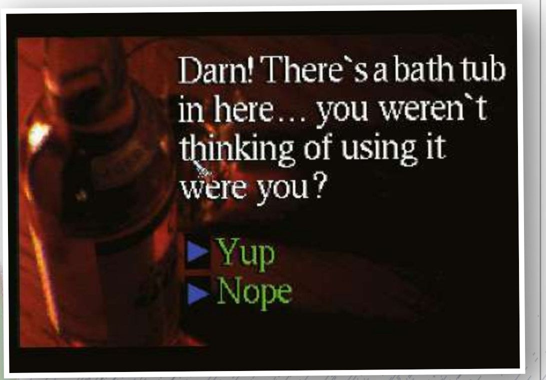
On-Line Entertainment would disappear after its joint venture with SCi, with Clem Chambers branching out into writing the Jim Evans series of thrillers. John Chasey, Fergus McNeill and Glenn Broadway would stay on at SCi, going on to work on titles like *Kingdom O' Magic* and *SWIV 3D*. Fergus would also branch out into writing in later years, while John and Glenn would work together one last time on an unpublished Dreamcast game *Stampede* for Io Productions. CD-ROM technology would become huge in later years, particularly on home consoles, but it remains interesting to learn about how it was first harnessed. ✱



» [CDTV] I caught my drink and I'm happy now.



» [CDTV] Let me say a few words before dying.



Darn! There`s a bath tub in here... you weren`t thinking of using it were you?

▶ Yup
▶ Nope

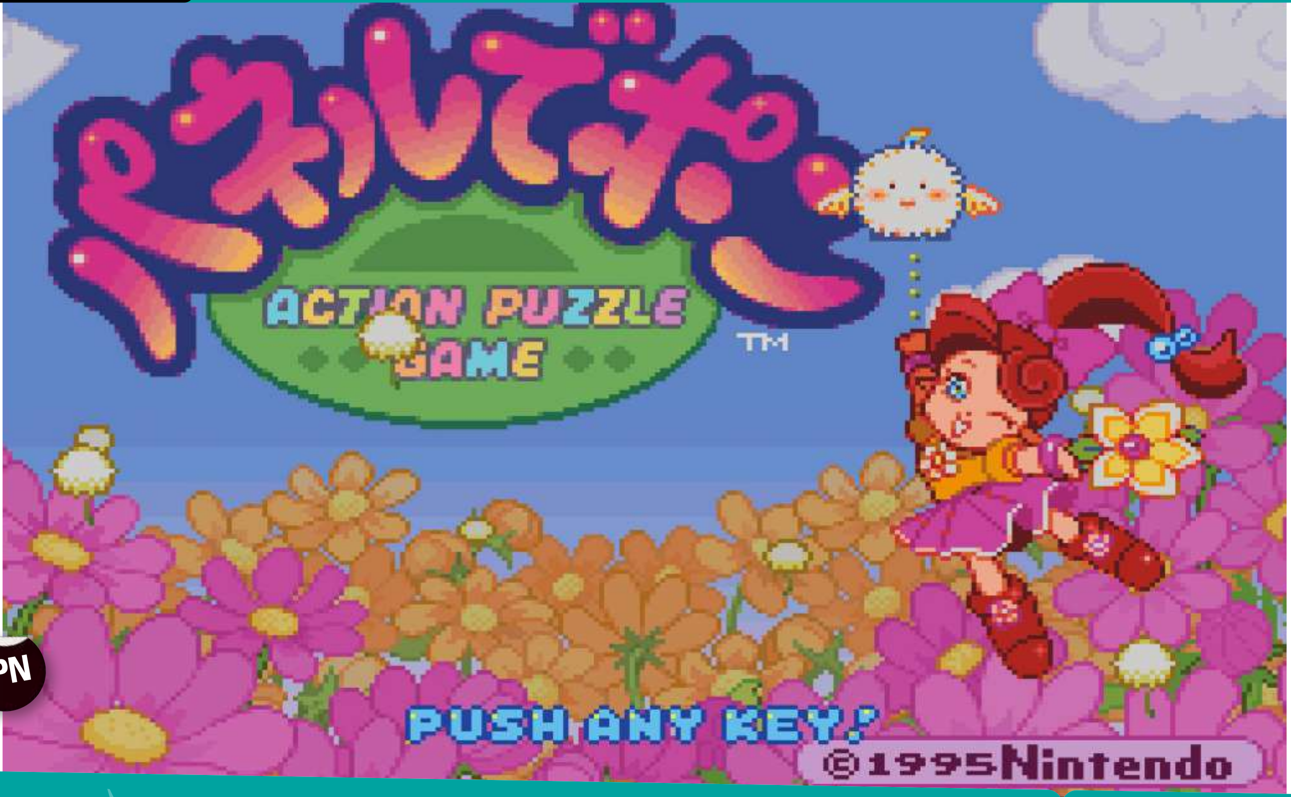
» [CDTV] Oh nope, god forbid!

RGT

Retro Gamer Travels

LOST IN TRANSLATION

How the rest of the world experienced your favourite games


JPN
ACTION PUZZLE GAME
TM
PUSH ANY KEY!
©1995 Nintendo

» [SNES] The characters of *Panel De Pon* were fine for Japanese gamers, but wouldn't work elsewhere.

PANEL DE PON

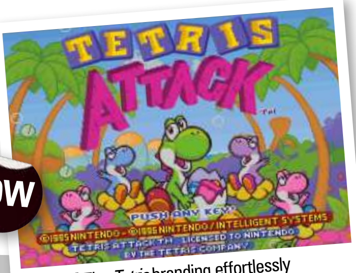
JPN → ROW
Japan → Rest of World

FORMAT	SNES
DEVELOPER	Nintendo/Intelligent Systems
YEAR	1996
ORIGIN	Japan
LOCALISED FOR	Rest of World
REASONS	Commercial

ECONOMY

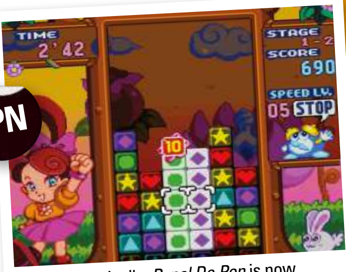
■ How do you sell a puzzle game outside of Japan? Well, according to videogame executives of the early Nineties, the best way to do it was to rebrand it wholesale by lifting a whole bunch of imagery from another videogame series starring a popular mascot. That's how *Puyo Puyo* became *Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine* and *Kirby's Avalanche*, and how *Cosmo Gang: The Puzzle* became *Pac-Panic*.

Panel De Pon met with a similar fate too. In its Japanese form, it was filled with original fairy characters that would likely have been considered too cutesy for Western players. Fortunately Yoshi had recently made his solo platform game debut in *Yoshi's Island*, and the game's characters and world became the basis for *Panel De Pon*'s rebranding, with a couple of musical changes. This was a smart move, allowing for some cuteness to be retained while adding a lot of extra star power. Less smart was the game's new name. The international versions starring Yoshi were released under the name *Tetris Attack*, despite the game having nothing to do with *Tetris*. This naming issue has become a stumbling block which prevented the game from being reissued in recent years. Japanese players that subscribed to the Satellaview service got to try the Yoshi version, which was broadcast under the name *Yoshi No Panepon* in 1996.

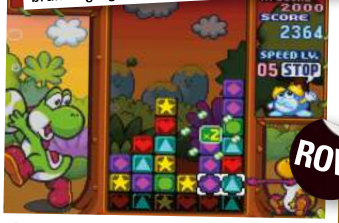

ROW
TETRIS ATTACK
PUSH ANY KEY!
©1995 NINTENDO · ©1996 NINTENDO / INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
TETRIS ATTACK TM LICENSED TO NINTENDO BY THE TETRIS COMPANY

» [SNES] The *Tetris* branding effortlessly communicated the game's genre, and Yoshi was a reassuringly familiar face..

PANEL DE PON
Departing: 1996


JPN
TIME
2'42
STAGE
1-2
SCORE
690
SPEED LV.
05 STOP
10

» [SNES] Ironically, *Panel De Pon* is now on the Switch Online service because of branding rights issues.


HI-SCORE
2000
SCORE
2364
SPEED LV.
05 STOP
×2
ROW

» [SNES] Interestingly, the redrawn graphics follow the colours and mood of the original scenes closely.

JUMPING FLASH!

JPN ➔ EUR
Japan ➔ Europe

JUMPING FLASH!
Departing: 1995

FORMAT
PlayStation ■

DEVELOPER
Exact/Ultra ■

YEAR
1995 ■

ORIGIN
Japan ■

LOCALISED FOR
Europe ■

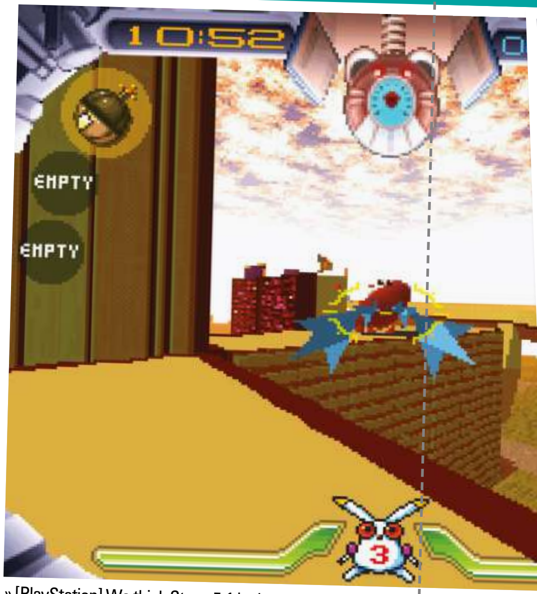
REASONS
Difficulty ■

DIFFICULTY

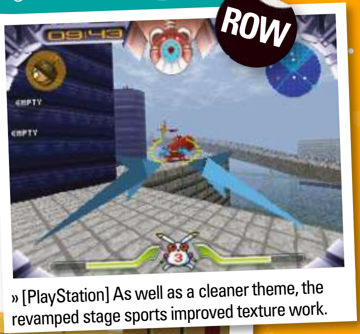
■ This 3D platform game thrilled early PlayStation adopters, thanks to the dizzying heights that robotic rabbit Robbit could achieve with his triple jump. The only problem was that you could beat the Japanese version in under an hour.

To compensate for this, the European version added a tougher second loop with shorter time limits. The smoggy cityscape of Stage 5-1 was also given a cleaner look. The North American release retained these changes, but cut out five short FMV sequences in which the MuuMuus commiserate over their defeats at a bar.

Japanese players later enjoyed the localised version, English voice acting and all, as *Jumping Flash!: Europe Version*. It was included as a free bonus disc with *Jumping Flash! 2*, which is a generous bonus.



» [PlayStation] We think Stage 5-1 looks rather ugly in the original version of the game.



» [PlayStation] As well as a cleaner theme, the revamped stage sports improved texture work.

KAMEN NO NINJA – HANAMARU

JPN ➔ USA
Japan ➔ USA

KAMEN NO NINJA – HANAMARU
Departing: 1990

FORMAT
NES ■

DEVELOPER
Now Production ■

YEAR
1990 ■

ORIGIN
Japan ■

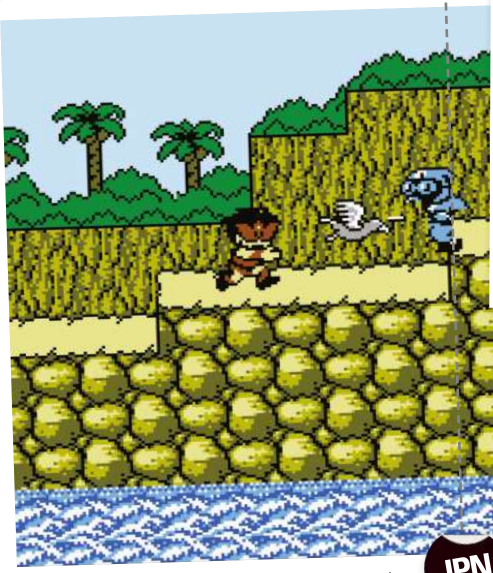
LOCALISED FOR
USA ■

REASONS
Commercial ■

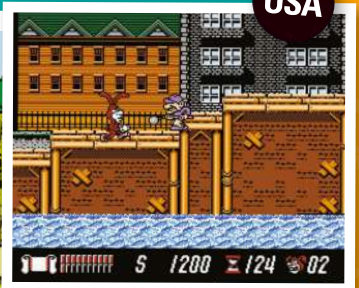
ECONOMY

■ Back in the Eighties, the Noid was constantly trying to stop people from getting delicious pizza. In the NES game *Yo! Noid*, he's tasked with saving a city. It's a bizarre heroic turn, which makes a lot more sense when you realise that the Domino's Pizza mascot wasn't the original star of his own game. The masked ninja Hanamaru took that role instead.

There's a bit more effort here than is usual for a promotional rebranding. The plot scenes and main sprite have been redrawn, but *Yo! Noid* goes a step further with fully redrawn levels and enemies, and even some new musical themes. Probably the most creative aspect of the makeover is the card-based ninjutsu battles, which use the same mechanics but now represent pizza-eating contests. In either form, it's a reasonable platformer.



» [NES] Here's our original protagonist, the masked ninja Hanamaru, running through the opening island stage.



» [NES] The level layout is the same in *Yo! Noid*, but it has been totally redrawn.

THE MAKING OF

RIVAL FOOTBALL GAMES APPEARED TO MEET THEIR MATCH WHEN KICK OFF WAS RELEASED IN 1989 BUT THEN DEVELOPER DINO DINI WENT ONE BETTER WITH A BLISTERING SEQUEL THAT HIT THE BACK OF THE NET FOR SCORES OF FANS

WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES

KICK OFF 2
ANCO

IN THE KNOW

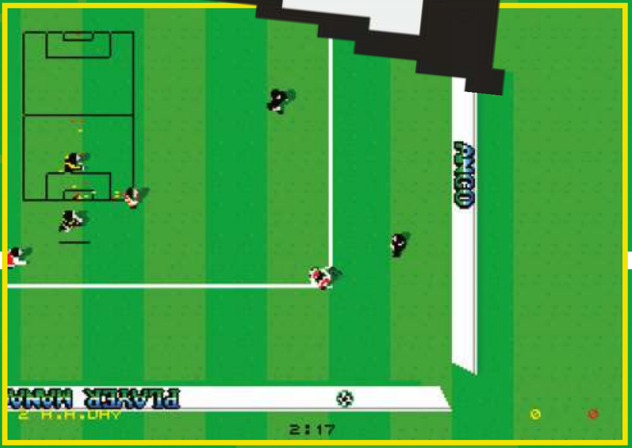
- » **PUBLISHER:** ANCO SOFTWARE
- » **DEVELOPER:** ANCO SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **PLATFORM:** ATARI ST, VARIOUS
- » **GENRE:** SPORTS

Whether or not you enjoyed playing *Kick Off*, there was no denying it was one helluva speedy game. So here are some fast facts. *Kick Off* came out in 1989. It offered a bird's-eye view of the action (like *Tehkan World Cup* and *MicroProse Soccer* before it). It took practice to master. The ball wouldn't stick to the players' feet. And the ping-pong passing nature of the action proved compelling.

If there were shortcomings (and there were), some were addressed by the data disk, *Kick Off: Extra Time*. It added extras like new team formations, extra referees, a shot power meter, control over goal kicks and a useful feature called After Touch. *Kick Off*'s developer and publisher Anco then released *Premier Manager*. This took *Kick Off*'s match engine and blended it with a soccer management sim – the first time that management and playing elements had been combined.

Premier Manager hit shop shelves in 1990 but, despite having worked on three releases separated by mere months, Anco wanted more. A decision was made to build upon *Kick Off* and *Kick Off: Extra Time* by producing a sequel called – what else? – *Kick Off 2*. In doing so, the series' prime creator Dino Dini also sought to develop something of a footballing ecosystem. "I wanted players of *Kick Off 2* to have a reason to buy *Player Manager* as well," he says.

The most obvious motivation was the ability for gamers to import their own tactics and teams from *Player Manager* and go

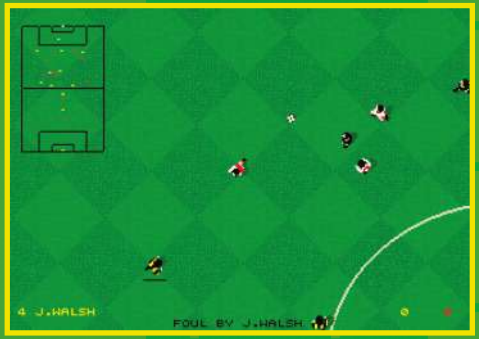


» [Amiga] The overview of the pitch comes in handy when defending against corners!

> “IN A MOMENT, YOU SUDDENLY SCORE THIS FANTASTIC GOAL”
> **DINO DINI**

head-to-head with other like-minded souls. “It meant gamers would come at *Kick Off 2* from different angles – playing and managing,” Dino says. “I had this vision that people would work at getting the best team they could to complement their own skill in *Kick Off 2* and that they would take their team to a friend’s house and have a good old bash at it.”

Since Dino had a base to work from (*Kick Off* and *Extra Time*), development of *Kick Off 2* was very straightforward. The experience of creating the data disk and *Player Manager* gave Dino a good idea of what he wanted in the sequel and After Touch was a priority. It gave players the ability to chip and bend the ball immediately after it had been kicked and the feature soon became an integral part of *Kick Off 2*’s DNA.



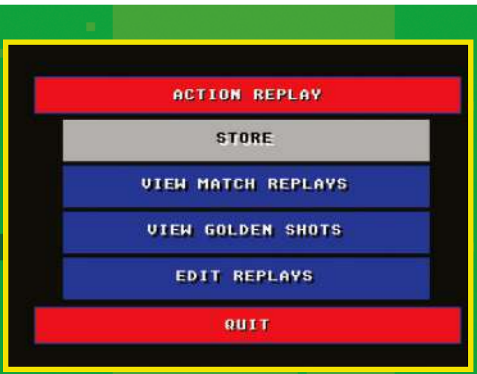
» [Amiga] Get the timing wrong and you will give away many fouls.

“One of the things that annoyed me about the design of *Kick Off* was the inability to aim shots other than picking one of the eight main directions,” Dino says. “I was thinking about how I could get more precision or more choice for the player when shooting the ball so I decided to cheat a little. Normally, in real life, you can’t control the ball after it has been kicked but it’s also very difficult to do it the other way around – it’s hard to pre-bend a ball or have some other way in which the timing affects the ball direction because you really want the ball to be kicked.”

The best way, Dino surmised, was to allow a swerve to be controlled after the ball was kicked. Once the ball was released by the player, the computer would spend the next 15 frames of animation playing out the direction it would travel depending on which way forward the joystick had immediately been pushed. “The result was something that looked like a swerve,” Dino says. “By directing the ball with the swerve, it meant players had more than eight directions in which they could shoot and it worked really well.”

After Touch was widely praised but it wasn’t the only way Dino got the most out of joysticks boasting only eight-way control and a fire button. Pulling back on the stick when the ball was on the ground, for example, would result in a chip. By reversing the direction when the ball was ▶

» Dino Dini is best known for kicking off the *Kick Off* series.



» [Amiga] Great moments in each match can be replayed and saved. Ah, memories!

Manager
ANCO

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

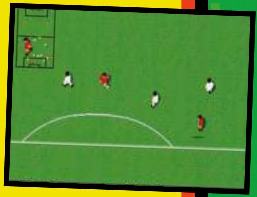
KICK OFF
SYSTEM: ATARI ST, VARIOUS
YEAR: 1989

PLAYER MANAGER (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ATARI ST, AMIGA, DOS
YEAR: 1990

GOAL!
SYSTEM: ATARI ST, VARIOUS
YEAR: 1993

THE NEXT LEG

HOW THE SERIES WENT INTO EXTRA TIME



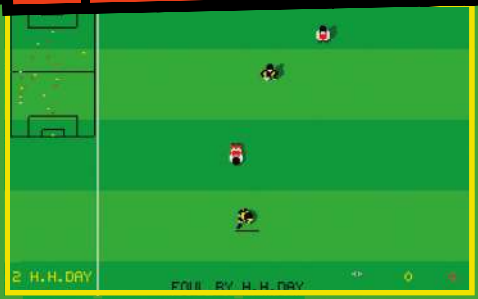
■ Dino Dini worked on the first two games in the *Kick Off* series as well as a bunch of expansion and data disks which required the main game to play. There were supposed to be 25 of these in total, ensuring the franchise would continue for some time but while that didn’t happen, some of them nevertheless made their mark.

Kick Off 2: The Final Whistle, for example, gave Amiga owners three extra pitches – icy, muddy and bumpy. The expansion disk also added a referee and a couple of assistants, stronger After Touch, another couple of kits and some lovely little flourishes such as having an injured player being tended to.

There was more control over corners and some trick moves along with an offside rule, while players could even play in goal. Yet for Dino, *Kick Off 2* was as far as he would go. He decided against sticking around at Anco Software so Steve Screech created *Kick Off 3* while Dino went on to develop *Goal!* for Virgin Games in 1993. It was great fun and allowed for some big-scoring games despite some harsh refereeing.

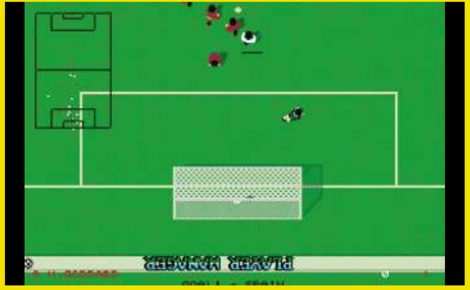
Since then, *Kick Off* has been, er, kicking around in one guise or another over the years, including *Kick Off 96*, *Kick Off 97* and *Kick Off 98*, the poorly received *Kick Off 2002* and largely forgotten *Kick Off Revival* in 2015 which attempted to bring the name back on the PlayStation 4.

CONVERSION CAPERS



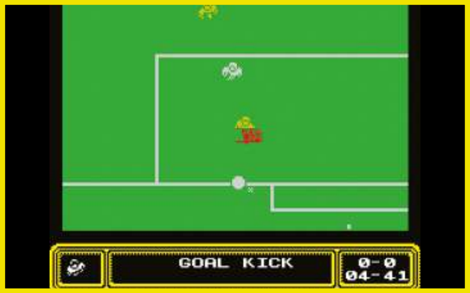
ATARI ST

Once dubbed "the best football game ever to grace the ST" by *CVG* magazine, *Kick Off 2* was also praised for its fast pace and slick passing. Although all the pitches in the Atari ST version looked the same, running the game on an expanded machine did at least add extra sound effects.



AMIGA

Different-looking pitches aside, there was little to distinguish this version from the Atari ST. Although the game dropped its pace in comparison to the original, it impressed with After Touch, an action replay and a timely World Cup tournament, building upon the original's Extra Time expansion pack.



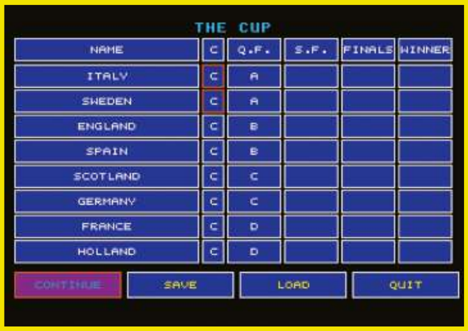
ZX SPECTRUM

Ported by Enigma Variations, the Speccy port was far from being top-flight material even though it sought to include features found in its 16-bit cousins. Aside from horrendous colour clash and poor controls, toggling the options didn't always have much effect on matches.

"THE ORACLE CRACK WAS CREATED BEFORE I COULD PATCH THE GAME"
DINO DINI

in the air, the joystick could also be used to perform an overhead kick. "The publisher asked me if I could put in an overhead kick and I said, 'Actually, yes I can,'" Dino says. "I said players reversed the stick while the ball was up in the air, we could add a scissor kick animation. And that's how the feature got added."

As in the first game, gamers could stop the ball by pressing the fire button before it reached their footballer's feet, thereby giving them control but it wasn't always obvious. "If players had the manual, they would know this but it always frustrated me because one of the criticisms often levelled at *Kick Off* was that you couldn't control the ball," Dino laments. "Once you stopped the ball, you could then push the stick in a certain direction, let go and it would perform a pass. When I initially had criticism saying it wasn't possible to control the ball, I was scratching my head wondering why they were saying that!"



THE CUP

NAME	C	Q.F.	S.F.	FINALS	WINNER
ITALY	C	A			
SWEDEN	C	A			
ENGLAND	C	B			
SPAIN	C	B			
SCOTLAND	C	C			
GERMANY	C	C			
FRANCE	C	D			
HOLLAND	C	D			

» [Amiga] As well as a league, it was also possible to take part in a cup.

Piracy was a big factor for this, he says. People simply wouldn't read the instructions because they didn't have them! "More people probably played the game using a pirated copy than the actual original and that's human nature," Dino continues. "But it's painful as a game developer especially when the reliance on pirated versions of the game meant your intent was lost. I'd get a wave of criticism from people who didn't understand the design who would have done it if they had the instructions to hand. People sharing the game weren't bothering to copy them."

Piracy caused other issues, Dino adds, pointing to one of the most popular cracks created by a group called Oracle. "There was a bug in *Kick Off 2* that I fixed in version 1.3 or 1.4, I forget which now, and it was due to a tiny piece of code that had been in *Player Manager*," he explains. "It's purpose was to make the AI players capable of better controlling the ball near the goal so that their scoring performance would increase and it was added because I was having trouble balancing the game. I felt it was the best solution to getting the job done."

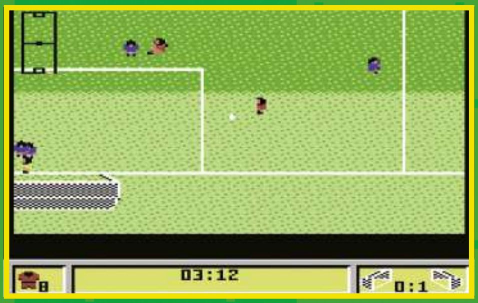
The *Premier Manager* code, he explains, meant it was more difficult for AI players to lose the ball when they were in the penalty area. "But those few lines of assembler code were left in *Kick Off 2* and I didn't realise it," he recalls. "When enabled, it meant the ball changed in the penalty area and it was more difficult to let go of it – something totally against my intention which is why I found the bug and fixed it.

"But the Oracle crack was created before I could patch the game and, since the vast majority of people were playing pirated copies… well, you can see how this blows up! Even 20 years later, people debate whether or not the penalty box dribble, as it became known, is the purest version. It has caused a lot of controversy in the *Kick Off* community over the years."

In many respects, *Kick Off 2* was refining what had come before. Even so, the combination of tweaks made to the game to produce a named sequel ultimately made it feel fresh. It was a more polished offering, making it easier to select formations, pitches and wind strength, for instance. There was also an option to play two three-minute halves as opposed to just five, ten and twenty minutes. Fast play for a fast-paced game!

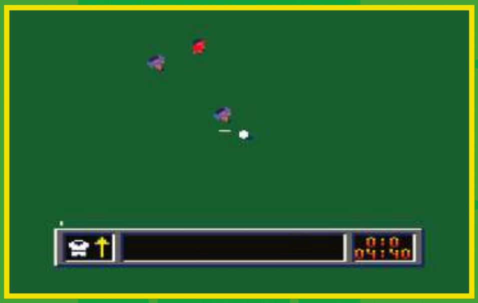
"Five minutes seemed like the best option for most players, although three

WILL THESE VERSIONS HAVE YOU DRIBBLING?



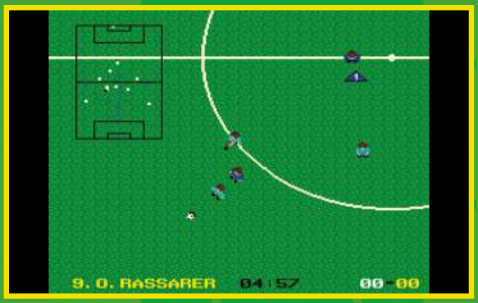
C64

■ *Kick Off 2* fared better on the Commodore 64, producing a fast sequel far that greatly improved on the original game. Even so, the pitch overview was far too small to be of any real use and the AI of your team's players was not as sharp as it ought to have been.



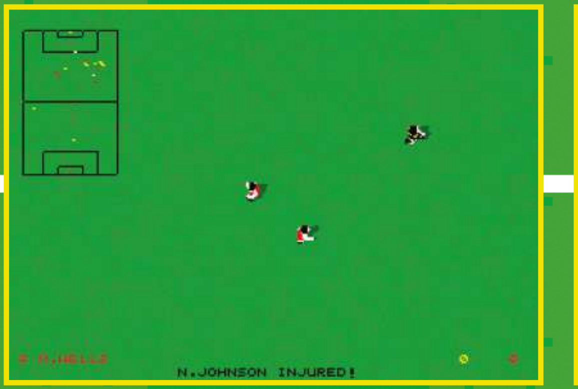
AMSTRAD CPC

■ Lacking a pitch overview as on the Spectrum version, this port was at least pleasant on the eye (if not on the ears). The on-screen display felt as if it was in the way but, overall, it was a vast improvement on the original *Kick Off* port for the CPC and certainly has its fans.

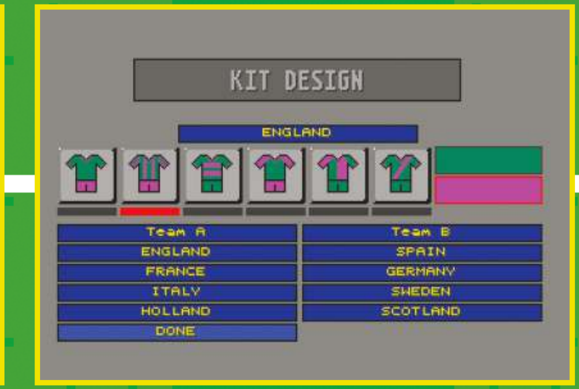

9. O. RASSARER
04:57
00-00

SNES

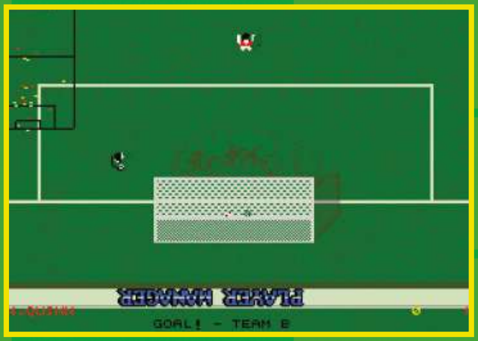
■ Called *World League Soccer* (or *Pro Soccer* in Japan), this port not only looked and sounded terrible, it also played every bit as poorly. With woeful collision detection, a dismal control method and nothing to warrant a rematch, it was a poor member of the team.


N.JOHNSON INJURED!

» [Amiga] Injured players would need to go off and be replaced by a substitute.


KIT DESIGN
ENGLAND
Team A
ENGLAND
FRANCE
ITALY
HOLLAND
DONE
Team B
SPAIN
GERMANY
SWEDEN
SCOTLAND

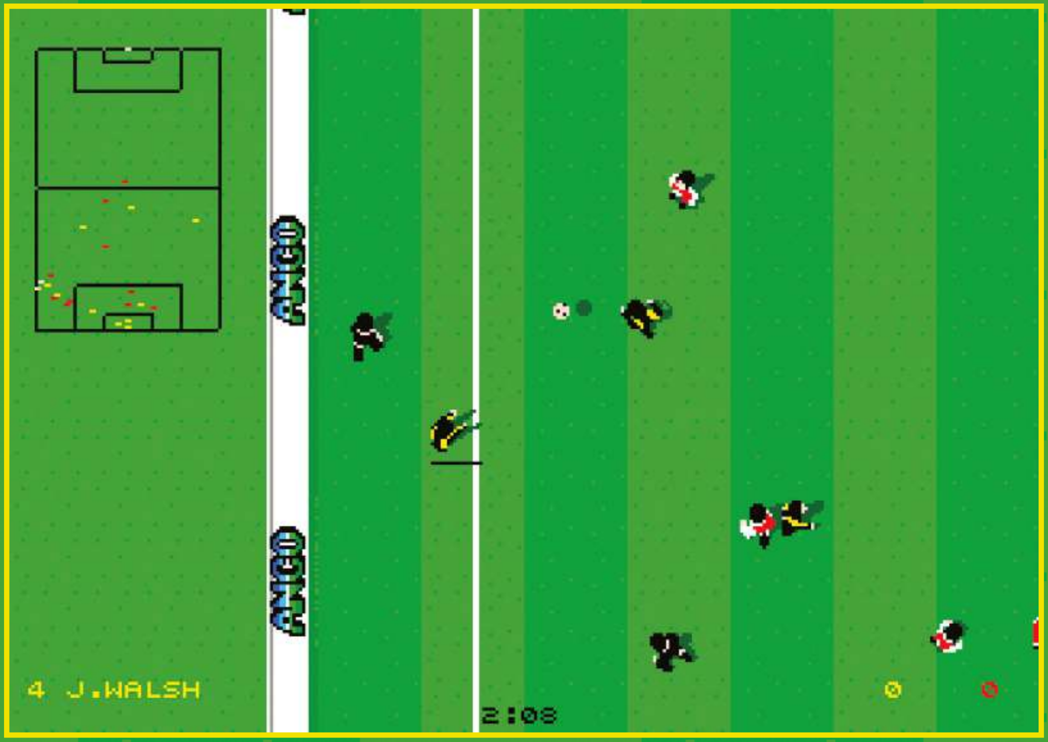
» [Amiga] Imagine how many World Cups England would win with this snazzy kit!


PLAYER MANAGER
GOAL! - TEAM B

» [Amiga] You can tell this pitch is soggy by the mud around the goal area.

minutes was great for anyone who was impatient," Dino says. One of the challenges in having the different times was ensuring the footballers chosen to compete in the match could stay on the pitch for most of the game! "I had to ensure that the stamina stat operated according to the length of a game so that was a bit of additional complexity," Dino affirms.

Goalies also received special attention. "The problem with goalkeepers," Dino begins, "is that people learn their exploits and then they complain about those exploits – we got a lot of feedback on this from those who played the original ▶


ANCO
ANCO
4 J.WALSH
2:08
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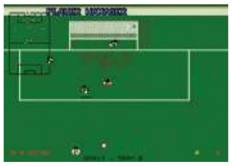
0

» [Amiga] The action was always fast and furious, giving little time to think.

TOP THE LEAGUE

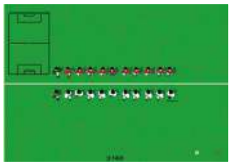
GOALS DON'T COME FREELY IN KICK OFF 2

ATTACK, ATTACK, ATTACK



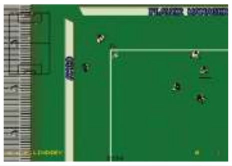
■ OK, easier said than done – getting hold of the ball isn't always that simple. But if you are in possession, heading for the centre of the goal and using After Touch after unleashing a shot can often beat the goalie if you get the timing right.

LIFE'S A PITCH



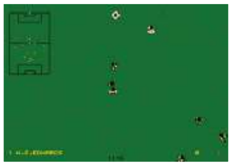
■ If you want an easy time of it, then opt for a normal pitch rather than one of the less favourable surfaces. The soggy pitch, for example, will force you to run and chase the ball more while the plastic pitch can make play feel a bit too nippy.

CORNER TACTICS



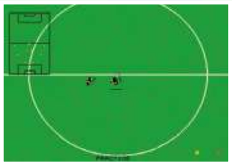
■ Hold the fire button to get some power behind the shot but aim away from the goalkeeper so that he doesn't end up intercepting it. If you can get it to a player within the box, all the better, particularly if you can use After Touch to whack the ball into the net.

THE LONG BALL



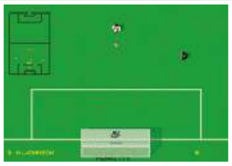
■ The simplest way of getting the ball into the opponent's half is to whack it up there. Sure, playing the long ball game is never pretty but you're more likely to lose possession if you're trying to pass your way up the pitch. Do that after some more practice.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

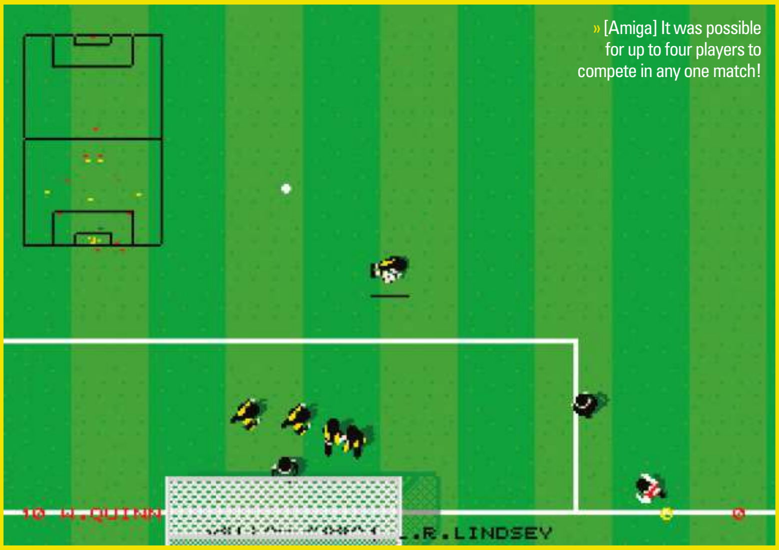


■ Which brings us to the practice mode which slows the game down a bit and frees you of the opposition. Take the time to learn how to dribble – running, turning, going left, right and so on. If you're a newcomer to the game, start here.

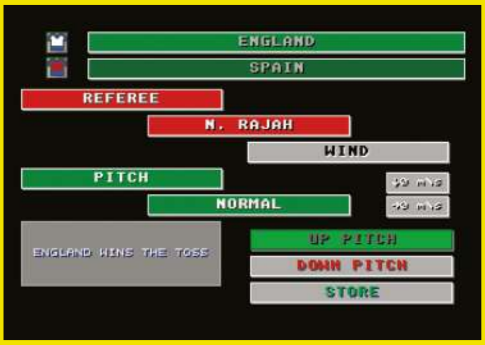
DON'T SLIDE IN!



■ If you slide tackle – especially in the box – you're inevitably going to end up giving away a penalty and they're really hard to defend against. It's better to dribble balls away from the opponent and chip it while heading for goal yourself.



» [Amiga] It was possible for up to four players to compete in any one match!

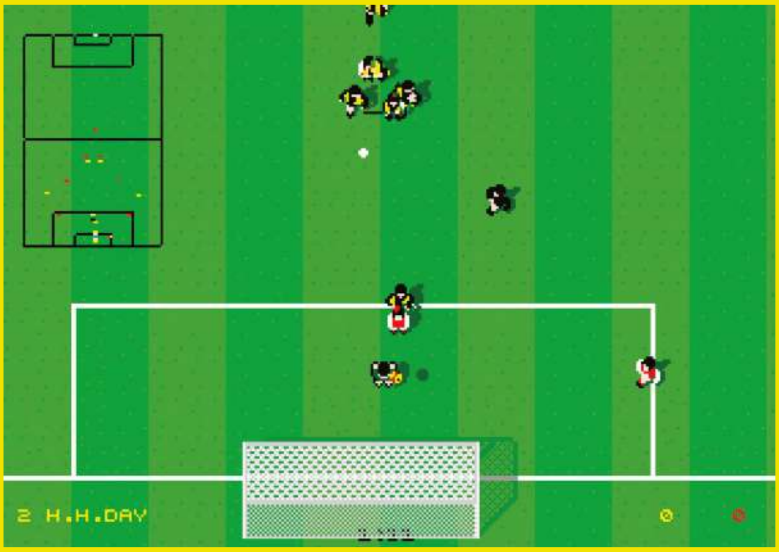


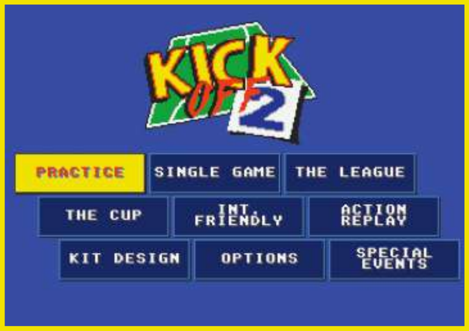
ENGLAND
SPAIN
REFEREE
N. RAJAH
WIND
PITCH
NORMAL
ENGLAND WINS THE TOSS
UP PITCH
DOWN PITCH
STORE

» [Amiga] Before each game, you could see a round-up of your chosen options..

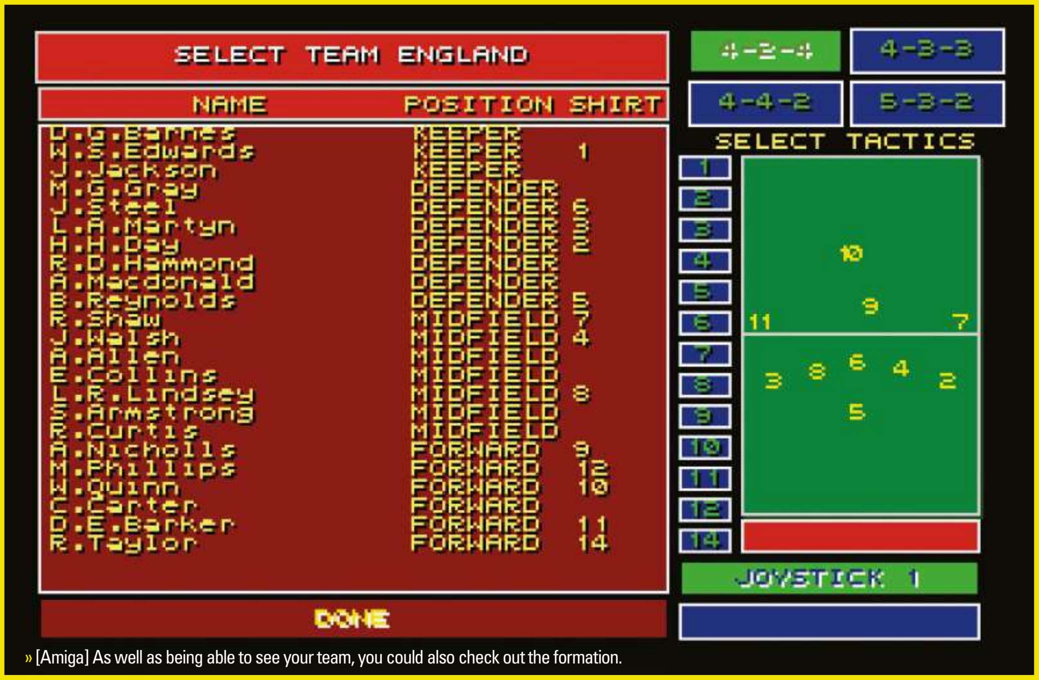
"MORE PEOPLE PROBABLY PLAYED THE GAME USING A PIRATED COPY THAN THE ACTUAL ORIGINAL"
DINO DINI

» [Amiga] The setpieces could be impressive, especially for free kicks.





» [Amiga] There were a few ways to play *Kick Off 2* and you could also import data from *Player Manager.*


SELECT TEAM ENGLAND

NAME	POSITION	SHIRT
D.G.Barnes	KEEPER	
W.S.Edwards	KEEPER	1
J.Jackson	KEEPER	
M.G.Gray	DEFENDER	
J.Steel	DEFENDER	6
L.A.Martyn	DEFENDER	3
H.H.Day	DEFENDER	2
R.D.Hammond	DEFENDER	
A.Macdonald	DEFENDER	
B.Reynolds	DEFENDER	5
R.Shaw	MIDFIELD	7
J.Walsh	MIDFIELD	4
A.Allen	MIDFIELD	
E.Collins	MIDFIELD	
L.R.Lindsey	MIDFIELD	8
S.Armstrong	MIDFIELD	
R.Curtis	MIDFIELD	
A.Nicholls	FORWARD	9
M.Phillips	FORWARD	12
W.quinn	FORWARD	10
C.Carter	FORWARD	
D.E.Barker	FORWARD	11
R.Taylor	FORWARD	14

» [Amiga] As well as being able to see your team, you could also check out the formation.

Kick Off. As a result, I decided to make the goalkeepers tougher but there was always a worry that I might have actually ended up diminishing the fun of the game." The tougher goalkeepers were indeed noticeable and made it hard for players to score yet, on the positive side, it ensured the game was more of a challenge.

Throughout development, Dino continued to wrestle with the best way of striking a balance between the attributes of the player and the attributes of the gamer. "It always raised an interesting question: who was playing the game? Was it the gamer or was it the named player on the pitch?" he says.

"I'd addressed the use of attributes in *Premier Manager* and refined it further in *Kick Off 2*, ending up with a 50-50 situation so that one did not completely overwhelm the other. This meant there was a strategic element to the game."

It also went some way towards working out whether or not the skill of the gamer was more important than the skill of the footballer in the game. "I'm not an expert on recent football titles, but the focus seems to have moved towards the attributes of the player rather than the attributes of the gamer," Dino says.

As well as working on the fundamentals of the gameplay, attention was also paid to the graphics and overall presentation. This time around it was possible for gamers to design the kits. Aside from different colours, gamers could choose between plain tops and those with patterns such as stripes and hoops. In the absence of a licence (which meant gamers couldn't make use of real team or player names), this was a welcome move.

"By reproducing the different kits for each of the teams as much as possible given the available technology and then interpreting the abilities of real-life players and mimicking them inside the game using the attribute system of *Player Manager*, I was able to create a very natural extension to the original game," says Dino. It was also possible to edit the team names in the game, just as it was in *Kick Off*, with the game looking to give the game a sense of occasion and allow it greater realism. Indeed, Dino was also keen for gamers to capture the big moments.

"Most of the time in football, not a lot really happens, but then, in a moment, you suddenly score this fantastic goal," Dino explains. "When you're watching a team you support, there's a certain magic to those moments but if they're not captured, they're lost forever." Cue, action replays and the ability to save goals. "The action replay allowed gamers to review a goal they had scored and relive it but I wanted people to save them as well," he says.

Adding to this sense of occasion and realism was the ability to play in a World Cup, an addition created to coincide with Italia '90. Many gamers would simply engage in two-player head-to-heads as random matches rather than compete in the game's cups and leagues, however. Intriguingly, people could also make use of an adapter so that two gamers could join together on one team.

At the same time, Dino was hoping that gamers would gel with the AI as much as they did with each other. "It's not possible for the AI to read the minds of gamers and always know which player they want to pass to," he explains. "But as long as the AI makes an effort and tries to go in the right direction, the gamer starts to learn its behaviour and adapt their play to it. This is a philosophy of design: instead of trying to make the thing perfect for the gamer, you reach a certain point and plasticity bridges the gap. When the two things are joined, you have a beautiful thing."

As with the debut *Kick Off*, there were some data disks for the sequel along with expansion packs. Of those, *Return To Europe*, *Giants Of Europe* and *Winning Tactics* were less comprehensive than *The Final Whistle* which added player stats, penalties, throw-ins, new kits and pitches, and the offside rule. But they ensured *Kick Off 2* remained fresh for fans.

On that score, there was no doubt *Kick Off 2* was a winner. Although other football games have fans who are just as passionate, the fact it's still played to this day (and features on The A500 Mini, attracting even more fans) says much about the successful implementation of the beautiful game! That it topped the charts upon release is also something Dino is rightfully proud of. "I'd get a magazine and say, 'Oh look, I'm number one,'" he says. "And I felt, damn it, I know what I'm on this earth to do!" *

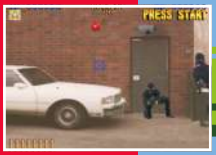
TOP 25 LIGHTGUN GAMES

WITH ARCADES ON THEIR LAST LEGS AND MODERN TELEVISIONS PREVENTING THE TECHNOLOGY FROM FUNCTIONING, IT'S FAIR TO SAY THE LIGHTGUN GAME IS ONE OF THE MOST ENDANGERED VIDEOGAME GENRES. THANKFULLY, THERE ARE PLENTY OF CLASSICS STILL WORTH A SHOT…

WORDS BY ASHLEY DAY

25 LETHAL ENFORCERS

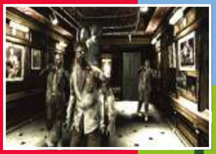
DEVELOPER Konami **YEAR** 1992
PLATFORMS Arcade, Various



■ With its digitised 'photo-real' criminals, popping up from behind desks, doors, cars and bins in hilariously static poses, Konami's *Lethal Enforcers* perfectly captures the feeling of a Hollywood police training range.

24 RESIDENT EVIL: THE UMBRELLA CHRONICLES

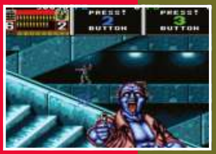
DEVELOPER Capcom/Cavia **YEAR** 2007
PLATFORMS PS3, Wii



■ Inspired by the lightgun-like possibilities of the Wii Remote, *The Umbrella Chronicles* retold the story of the original *Resident Evil* as an on-rails shooter, with stages that were longer and harder than those typically seen in arcades.

23 BEAST BUSTERS

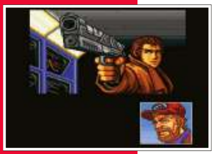
DEVELOPER SNK **YEAR** 1989
PLATFORMS Amiga, Arcade, Atari ST



■ Notable for being the first three-player lightgun game, *Beast Busters* let players gleefully pump rapid-fire shots into a horde of zombies and watch as their giant sprites pleasingly exploded in satisfying, bloody chunks.

22 SNATCHER

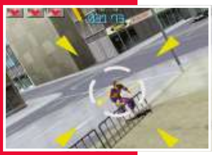
DEVELOPER Konami **YEAR** 1994
PLATFORMS Mega-CD



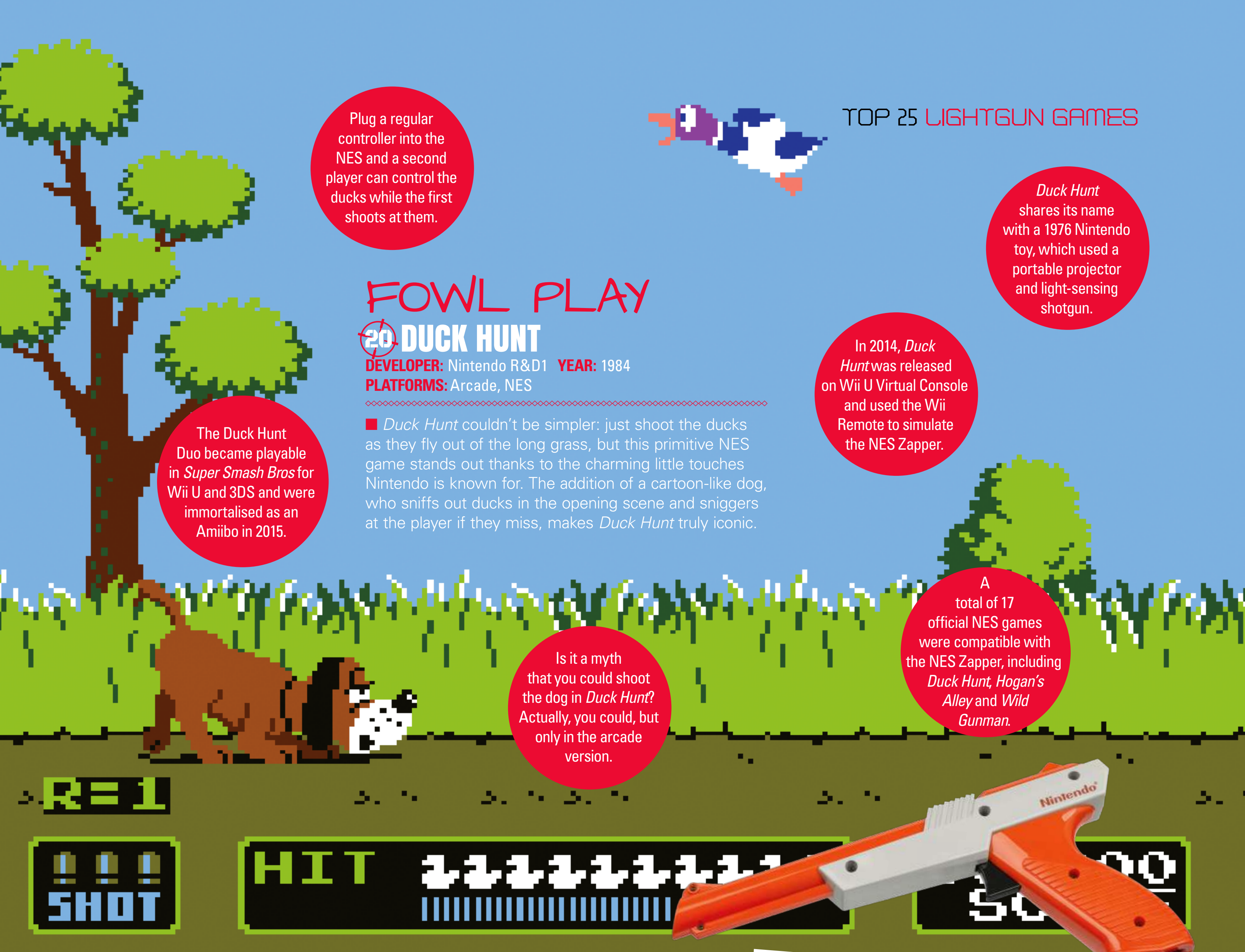
■ In the sole English language release of Hideo Kojima's cyberpunk adventure, players could plug in Konami's Justifier gun (originally released for *Lethal Enforcers*) and use it to blow away Snatchers just like a real hard-boiled Junker.

21 GUNBLADE NY

DEVELOPER Sega AM3 **YEAR** 1995
PLATFORMS Arcade, Wii



■ Building on the 3D design of *Virtua Cop*, *Gunblade NY* took the action to new heights with a satisfying rapid-fire machine gun, aimed from the dynamic perspective of a nimble Apache helicopter. Shallow but fun.



FOWL PLAY

20 DUCK HUNT

DEVELOPER: Nintendo R&D1 **YEAR:** 1984
PLATFORMS: Arcade, NES

■ *Duck Hunt* couldn't be simpler: just shoot the ducks as they fly out of the long grass, but this primitive NES game stands out thanks to the charming little touches Nintendo is known for. The addition of a cartoon-like dog, who sniffs out ducks in the opening scene and sniggers at the player if they miss, makes *Duck Hunt* truly iconic.

Plug a regular controller into the NES and a second player can control the ducks while the first shoots at them.

Duck Hunt shares its name with a 1976 Nintendo toy, which used a portable projector and light-sensing shotgun.

The Duck Hunt Duo became playable in *Super Smash Bros* for Wii U and 3DS and were immortalised as an Amiibo in 2015.

In 2014, *Duck Hunt* was released on Wii U Virtual Console and used the Wii Remote to simulate the NES Zapper.

Is it a myth that you could shoot the dog in *Duck Hunt*? Actually, you could, but only in the arcade version.

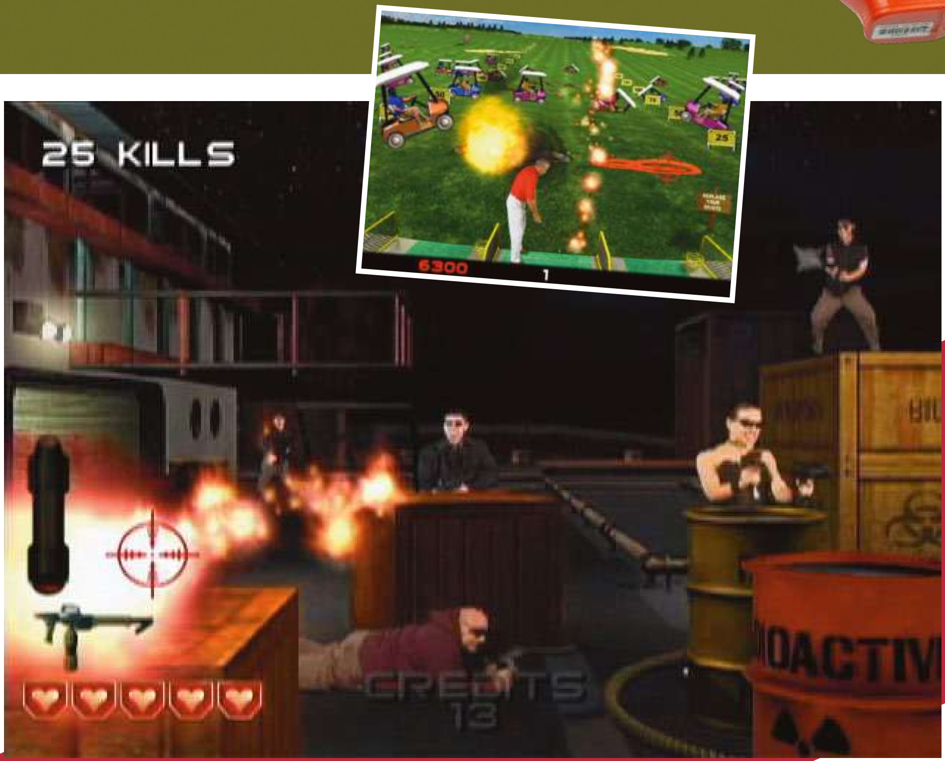
A total of 17 official NES games were compatible with the NES Zapper, including *Duck Hunt*, *Hogan's Alley* and *Wild Gunman*.

AN ASSAULT ON THE SENSES

19 TARGET: TERROR

DEVELOPER: Raw Thrills **YEAR:** 2004
PLATFORMS: Arcade, Wii

■ By 2008, when *Target: Terror* came to Wii, its digitised graphics were considered so outdated, it was a laughing stock. IGN even awarded it 'Worst Graphics' of the year, saying, "This makes *Lethal Enforcers* look good." But what do they know! The live-action visuals are better than anything from the Nineties, with tons of unique animations. Baddies don't just pop up and disappear; they abseil from above or crawl beneath cars, they bend over in pain when shot in the groin, or open their coat to reveal a jacket full of TNT. This is a game defined by surprising moments – including a bonus stage where you launch grenades at golf carts – and those moments come thick and fast. ▶



GOING UP!

18 ELEVATOR ACTION: DEATH PARADE

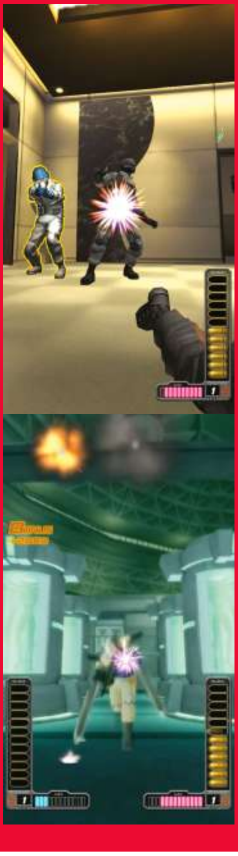
DEVELOPER Taito **YEAR** 2009
PLATFORMS Arcade

- The third main entry in Taito's *Elevator Action* series is a major departure from convention, eschewing 2D run-and-gun action for lightgun-based thrills.

- The core theme is brilliantly retained by a set of physical doors that cover the screen, opening and closing to simulate riding an elevator.

- The vertically oriented screen is unusual for the genre and gives *Death Parade* an almost claustrophobic feel.

- Players will occasionally need to close the door to avoid bosses and can use the elevator buttons to choose which floor they go to.



MOTION SICKNESS

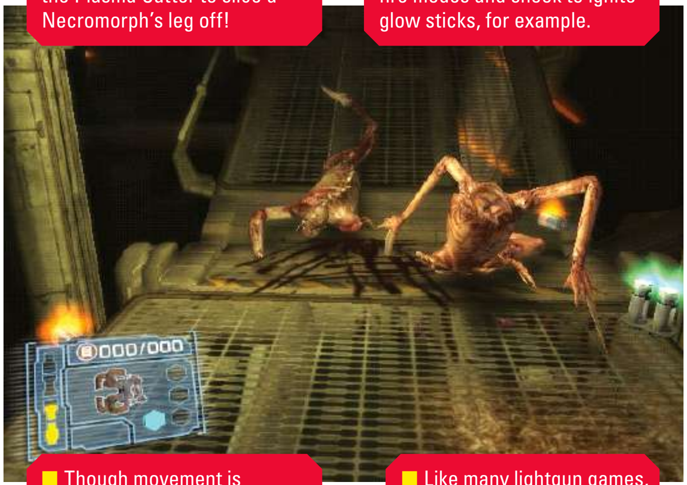
17 DEAD SPACE: EXTRACTION

DEVELOPER: EA **YEAR:** 2009 **PLATFORMS:** Wii, PS3

Free of the need to please arcade-goers, this motion-controlled spin-off slowed the pace right down to create a tense horror experience that's both a worthy companion to the main *Dead Space* games and a moody lightgun shooter like no other.

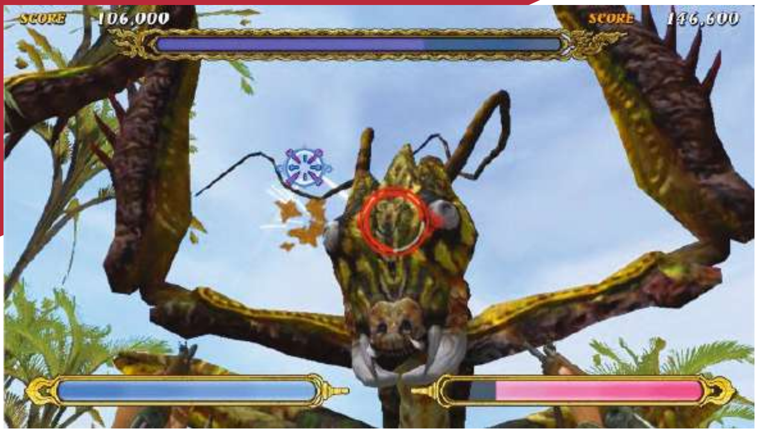
- Using mining tools, rather than guns, is all part of the fun, especially when you use the Plasma Cutter to slice a Necromorph's leg off!

- The Wii Remote isn't just used like a lightgun. It can be twisted to activate alternative fire modes and shook to ignite glow sticks, for example.



- Though movement is entirely on-rails, the player can occasionally nudge the camera to look around rooms in search of key items or bonus pick-ups.

- Like many lightgun games, *Dead Space: Extraction* features a two-player co-op mode that can be dropped in and out of at any time.

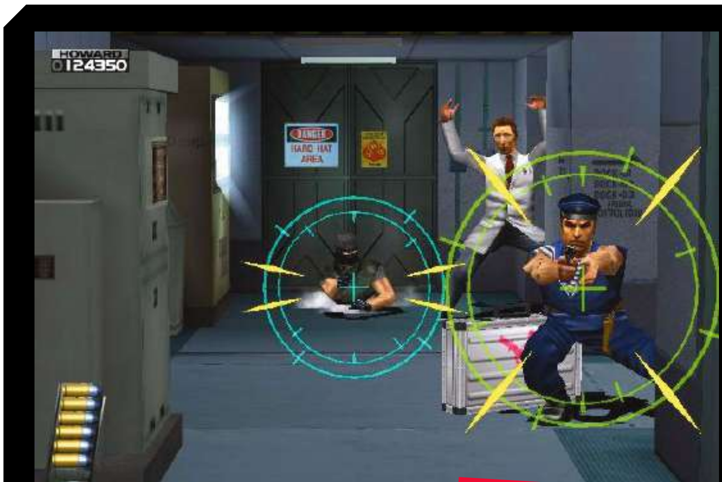


COUPLE'S RETREAT

16 LET'S GO JUNGLE!

DEVELOPER: Sega **YEAR:** 2006 **PLATFORMS:** Arcade

This light-hearted game, in which a couple escape an island of mutated creatures, is one best played in co-op. Shoot in perfect synchronisation and you'll be rewarded with a high compatibility score. Who wouldn't want their relationship officially endorsed by Sega?



FROM SEGA WITH LOVE

15 CONFIDENTIAL MISSION

DEVELOPER Sega/Hitmaker **YEAR** 2000 **PLATFORMS** Arcade, Dreamcast

Confidential Mission is so similar to *Virtua Cop*, right down to the oversized targets and Justice Shots that at times it feels like the same game with a new theme over the top. But what a theme! The secret agent styling, heavily inspired by *James Bond* and *Mission: Impossible*, is perfect for the lightgun genre and makes for a fun and breezy experience. The scenarios are suitably spy-like, with the highlight being a shoot-out in, and on top of, a speeding train while bad guys shoot from snowmobiles in pursuit. You also get to try out some cool gadgets, like a rope launcher or sticky bullets, during certain special scenes that branch the story or lead to alternate endings depending on how successfully you put them to use. If you can, get the Dreamcast version, which is packed with extra modes, training missions and unlockable extras including Another World, a remixed version of the main game with radically different situations to tackle.

SHOOTING THE Shit

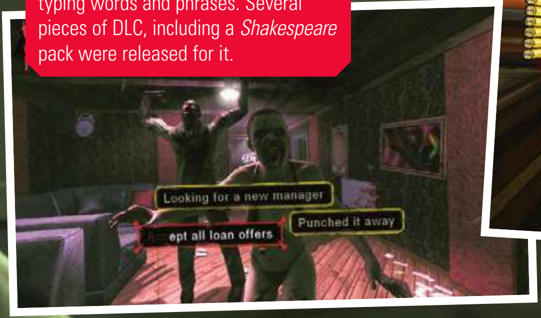
14 THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL

DEVELOPER Headstrong Games **YEAR** 2009
PLATFORMS Wii, PS3, PC, Mobile

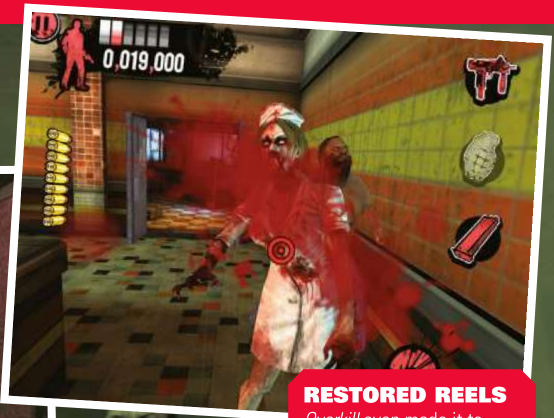
■ Inspired by *Grindhouse*, the 2007 Robert Rodriguez/Quentin Tarantino double feature, *House Of The Dead: Overkill* filtered Sega's arcade formula through an exploitation lens, with chapters modelled after cheesy VHS horrors and a script that would fill the average swear jar in seconds. The tone is far from politically correct, and won't be for everyone, but underneath the divisive humour you'll find a tense action shooter that's packed with inventive moments. It may not be the best game in the *House Of The Dead* series, but *Overkill* is certainly the boldest.

THE FACTS OF STRIFE

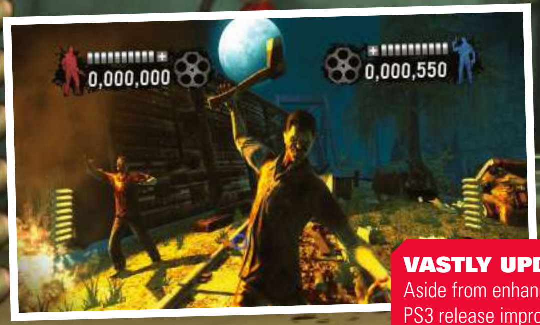
Cool things about Sega's sweary sequel



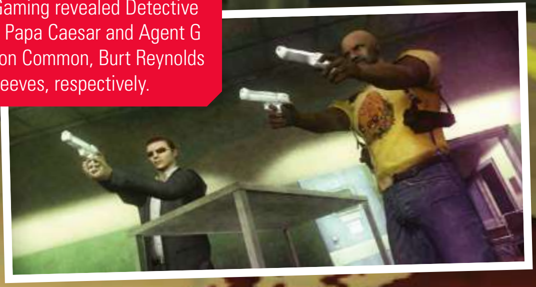
GET TYPING
Typing Of The Dead: Overkill made its PC debut in 2013. As you'd expect it features the ability to kill enemies by typing words and phrases. Several pieces of DLC, including a *Shakespeare* pack were released for it.



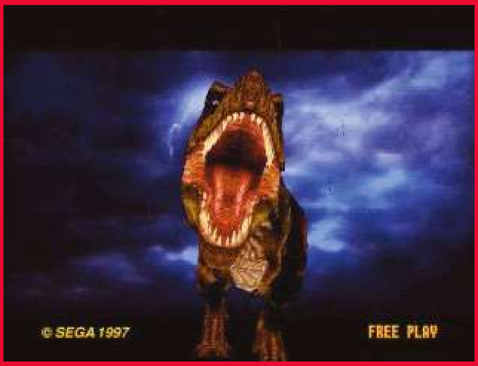
RESTORED REELS
Overkill even made it to iOS and Android in 2013 as *The Lost Reels*. It's a fun diversion but is ultimately lacking in content next to its big console peers. It has long been discontinued.



VASTLY UPDATED
Aside from enhanced visuals, the PS3 release improves on the Wii original by adding two exclusive levels and a new character called Candi Stryper. There are also new bosses and it supports 3D TVs.



CALL MY AGENT
If some of the characters in *Overkill* feel familiar it's intentional. An interview with BritishGaming revealed Detective Washington, Papa Caesar and Agent G were based on Common, Burt Reynolds and Keanu Reeves, respectively.



13 THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK

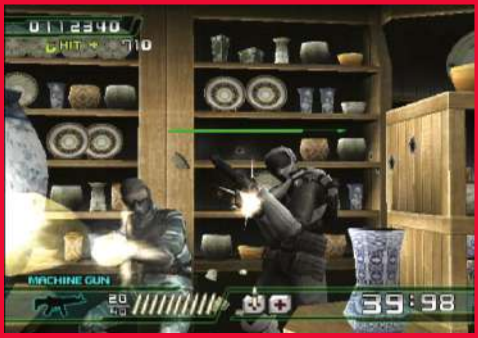
DEVELOPER Sega AM3 **YEAR** 1997
PLATFORMS Arcade

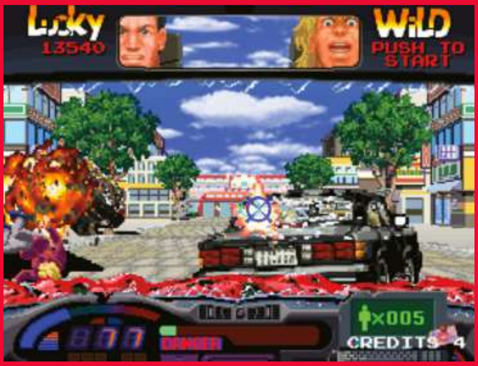
■ *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* used the cutting-edge tech of Sega's Model 3 arcade board to deliver a wow factor that had never been seen in the genre before. When that T-rex chased you down, it felt just as exciting as the movie.

12 CRISIS ZONE

DEVELOPER Namco/Tose **YEAR** 1999
PLATFORMS Arcade, PS2

■ This *Time Crisis* spin-off trades precision, duck-and-cover shooting for the thrills of a portable riot shield and a semi-automatic. Accuracy isn't necessary here. In fact, levels are populated with hundreds of objects designed to spectacularly litter the screen on impact, rewarding those who spray liberally!





11 LUCKY & WILD

DEVELOPER Namco **YEAR** 1993
PLATFORMS Arcade

■ Inspired by buddy cop movies like *Tango & Cash*, *Lucky & Wild* thrusts two players into a thrilling high-speed shoot-out. If you have a chance to play, make sure to jump in the driver's seat, because only player one gets to shoot and steer at the same time!

10 DIE HARD TRILOGY

DEVELOPER Probe Entertainment
YEAR 1996
PLATFORMS PC, PlayStation, Saturn

A generous three games in one, *Die Hard Trilogy* qualifies for this list thanks to its middle section, based on *Die Hard 2*, which is a full-on *Virtua Cop*-alike that's way better than you'd ever expect from a licensed game. The destruction is so gloriously OTT; as you blast your way through Dulles Airport, glass shatters, walls explode and bodies fly through the air in gratifying fashion. Think of the other two games as a bonus!

9 THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2

DEVELOPER Sega AM1 **YEAR** 1998
PLATFORMS Arcade, Various

Sega's masterful sequel took the zombie horror out of the house and into the streets, injecting a faster pace, more varied locations and absolutely enormous bosses into *The House Of The Dead*. Packed with memorable, iconic moments, it's the definitive game in the series and one of the best in the genre, offering the infinitely replayable arcade quality that Sega is known for. "Suffer like G did?" Yes please!

8 VIRTUA COP 2

DEVELOPER Sega AM2 **YEAR** 1995
PLATFORMS Arcade, Various

PRESS START

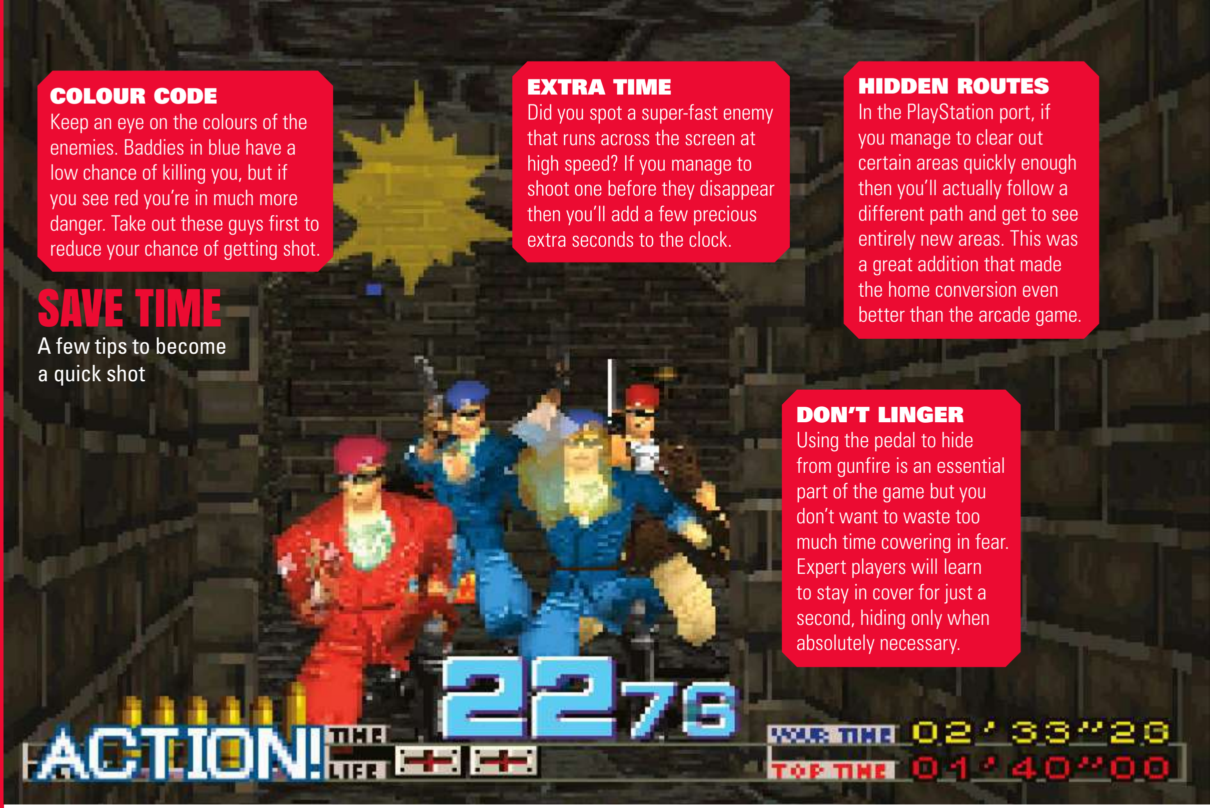
In many ways, *Virtua Cop* is the ultimate lightgun game. Boiled down to the essentials of the genre, it not only demands great precision and accuracy; with the Justice Shots it rewards them too. *Virtua Cop 2* does all of this but bigger, bolder and faster. It's particularly good fun on Saturn.

PUT THE PEDAL TO THE METAL

7 TIME CRISIS

DEVELOPER: Namco **YEAR:** 1995 **PLATFORMS:** Arcade, PlayStation, PS2

While most lightgun shooters keep the player 'on-rails' like a roller-coaster, *Time Crisis* gave players more control through the brilliant innovation of its foot pedal. Using the pedal to duck behind cover and reload, as bullets fly overhead, is an unparalleled thrill. While the ticking clock, which ingeniously discourages you from hiding too long, keeps the tension high. The pace is phenomenal, the action is exhilarating and the gameplay supremely tactical. It's a classic that has stood the test of time.



SAVE TIME

A few tips to become a quick shot

COLOUR CODE
Keep an eye on the colours of the enemies. Baddies in blue have a low chance of killing you, but if you see red you're in much more danger. Take out these guys first to reduce your chance of getting shot.

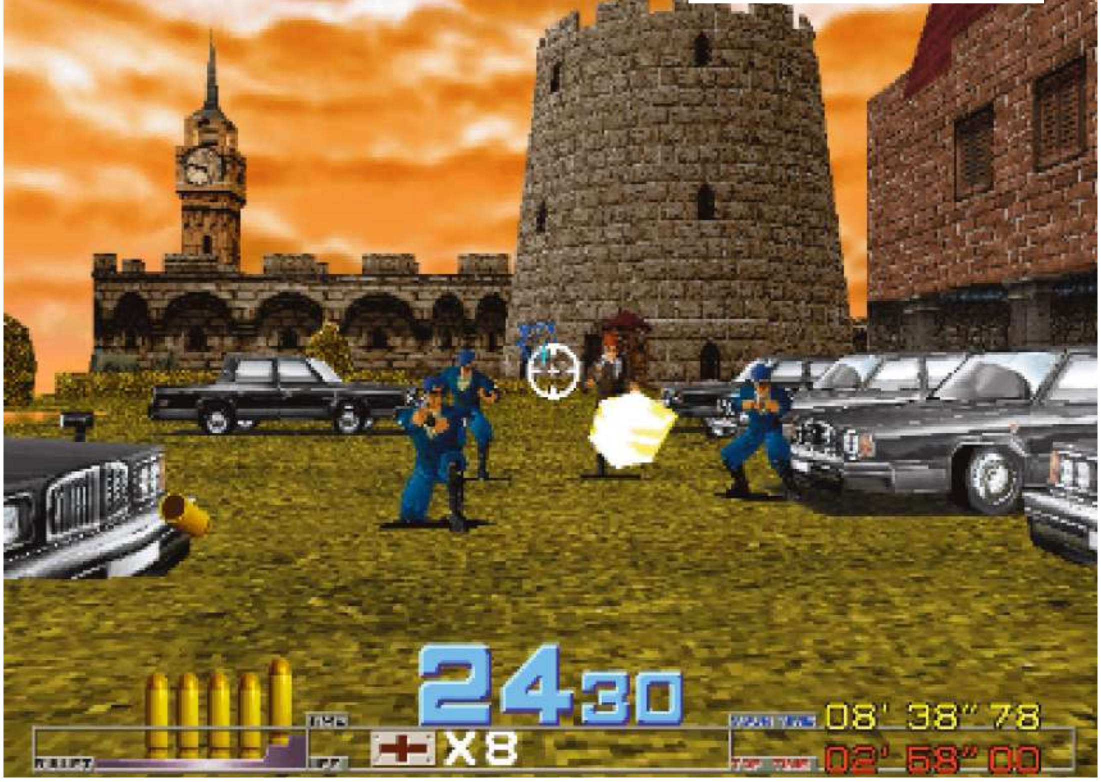
EXTRA TIME
Did you spot a super-fast enemy that runs across the screen at high speed? If you manage to shoot one before they disappear then you'll add a few precious extra seconds to the clock.

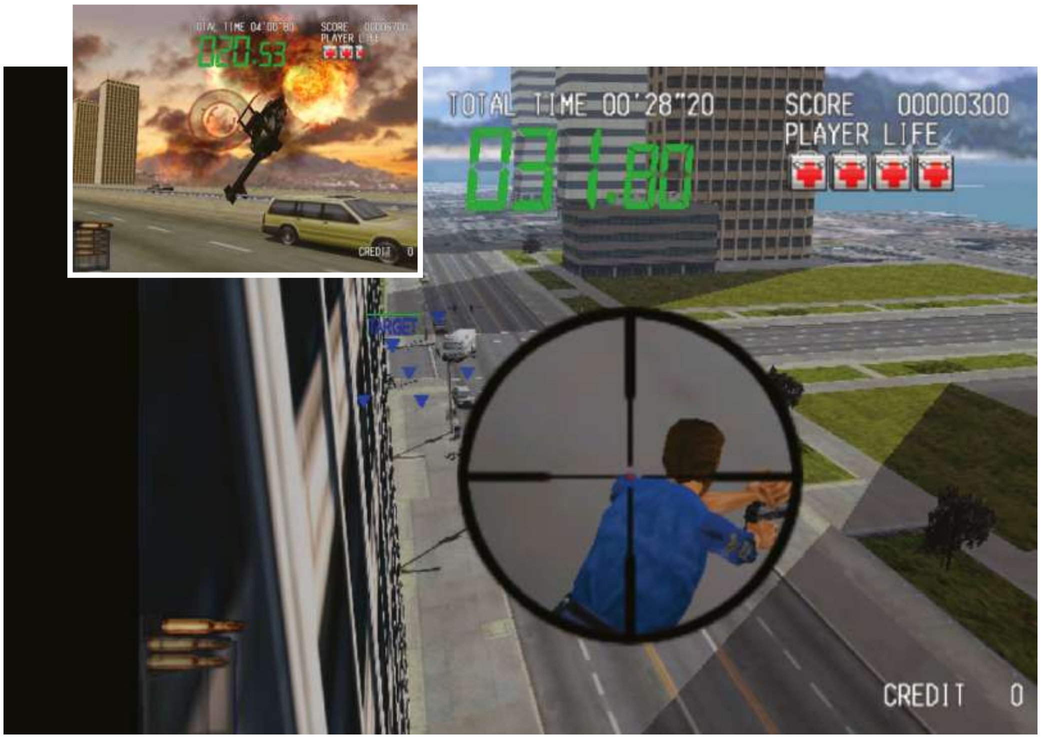
HIDDEN ROUTES
In the PlayStation port, if you manage to clear out certain areas quickly enough then you'll actually follow a different path and get to see entirely new areas. This was a great addition that made the home conversion even better than the arcade game.

DON'T LINGER
Using the pedal to hide from gunfire is an essential part of the game but you don't want to waste too much time cowering in fear. Expert players will learn to stay in cover for just a second, hiding only when absolutely necessary.

DANGER
3670

4 HITS!
TIME 38
LIFE
SCORE 9930




TOTAL TIME 00'28"20
031.80
SCORE 00000300
PLAYER LIFE
CREDIT 0

A VIEW TO A KILL

6 SILENT SCOPE

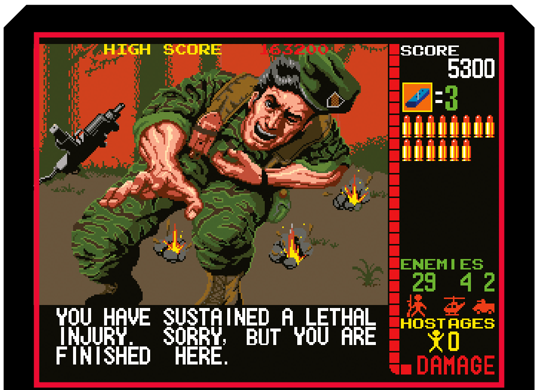
DEVELOPER: Konami **YEAR:** 1999
PLATFORMS: Arcade, Various

With its tiny screen built into the rifle's scope, and the main monitor for the wide perspective, *Silent Scope* does an incredible job of simulating a tense sniper mission. Albeit with the fast pace and daft moments you'd expect from a Japanese arcade game. Sadly, most console conversions aren't lightgun compatible, but the Xbox port did have a unique rifle controller, which used a face sensor to activate a magnified view on the TV exactly at the point you looked through the scope. With or without a lightgun, however, *Silent Scope* remains a classic.

I SPY...

Some of the sights you'll see through the silent scope

BOBO?
BULL'S-EYE
CHEEKY!
DON'T SHOOT THE HOSTAGE
DRIVE CAREFULLY NOW
EYE ON THE BALL
GOOD GUYS WEAR BLACK
NICE SQUATS!
NIGHTY-NIGHT
THIS GUY WAS NO HELP AT ALL


HIGH SCORE
SCORE
5300
=3
ENEMIES
29 4 2
HOSTAGES
X0
DAMAGE

YOU HAVE SUSTAINED A LETHAL INJURY. SORRY, BUT YOU ARE FINISHED HERE.

5 OPERATION WOLF

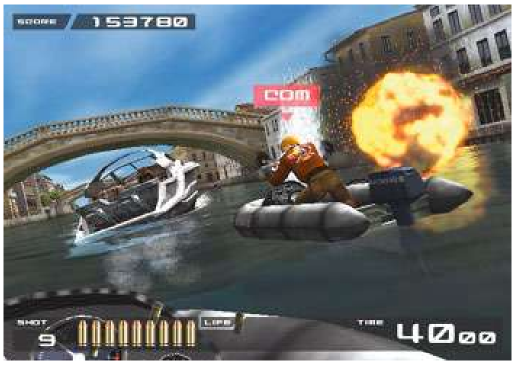
DEVELOPER Taito **YEAR** 1987
PLATFORMS Arcade, Various

In the mid-Eighties, as Arnie and Sly dominated cinema screens with their guns, grenades and greased up biceps, Taito capitalised on the trend with a machine gun-powered assault across six stages of military mayhem. With its dramatic attract sequence (inspired by *Commando*'s iconic tooling-up scene) an oversized Uzi lightgun, and an endless parade of soldiers, tanks and helicopters to destroy, *Operation Wolf* perfectly captures the excessive action spirit of the decade. Its arcade success was also replicated on numerous home systems.

HOW CO-OP ENHANCED TIME CRISIS

4 TIME CRISIS II

DEVELOPER: Namco **YEAR:** 1997
PLATFORMS: Arcade, PS2


SCORE
153780
COM
SHOT
9
LIFE
TIME
40 00

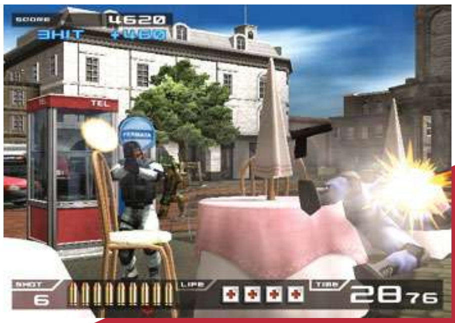
Time Crisis II retains the central unique selling point of the foot pedal, used to reload and hide.

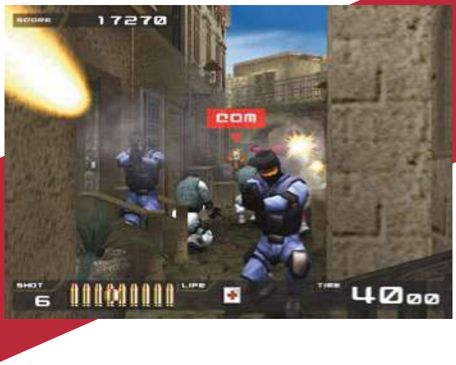
But this time around there were two guns and two pedals, for simultaneous co-op action.

There were also two monitors in the cabinet, so players don't have to follow the same route.

Each player often goes their separate ways and experiences the action from a different perspective.

Sometimes you might spot one another amid the chaos and help out with covering fire.


SCORE
4620
3HIT
+480
TEL
SHOT
6
LIFE
TIME
28 76


SCORE
17270
COM
SHOT
6
LIFE
TIME
40 00

EARTH, WIND, FIRE, LIGHTGUN

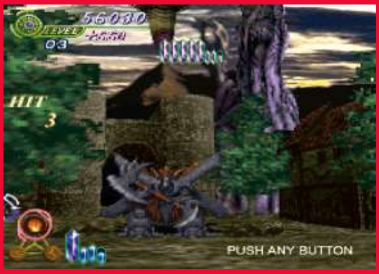
3 ELEMENTAL GEARBOLT

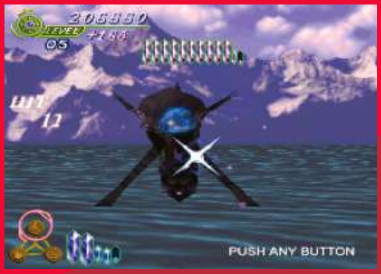
DEVELOPER Alfa System **YEAR** 1997 **PLATFORMS** PlayStation

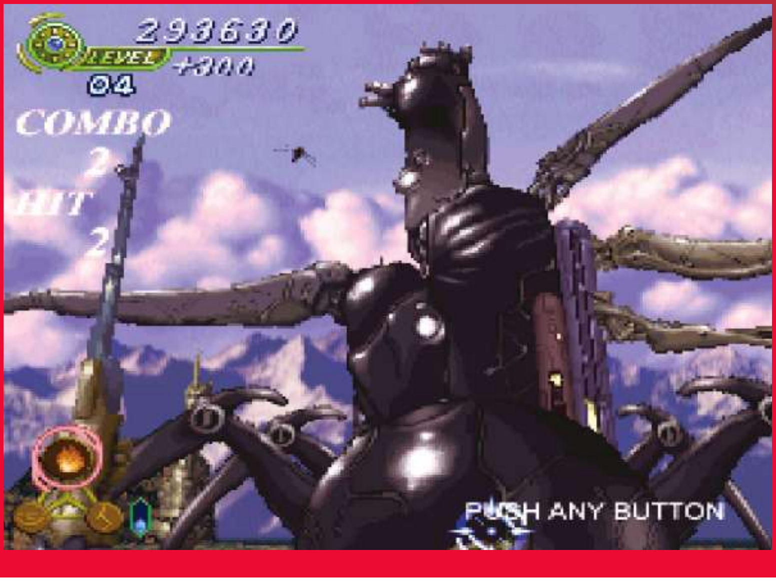
■ Supremely playable and masterfully crafted, *Elemental Gearbolt* is a unique fusion of shooter and RPG. As you shoot down enemies with one of three magic projectiles, you'll start to rack up points, which can be exchanged for experience to increase your level and shooting power.

Earning points isn't easy though, especially if you play on Normal or higher. There's a general level of difficulty just from the speed at which enemies attack, but there's also a strict system that discourages you from spamming the trigger. Miss a shot a couple of times and your gun will jam up and prevent you from firing again for a crucial second or two. Furthermore, you'll only earn the biggest scores by making consecutive shots without missing and building up your combo multiplier. The net result of these mechanics is that only the most accurate and methodical shooting will get you through *Elemental Gearbolt*. You'll need to play certain levels repeatedly to master them, but when you get good enough to shoot down scores of monsters in a row without missing a beat or breaking a sweat, you'll feel like a lightgun god.

This exceptional game design is complemented by a captivating world view (reminiscent of *Panzer Dragoon*), gorgeous anime cutscenes directed by the legendary Rintaro, and one of the greatest soundtracks on PS1, all of which add up to make *Elemental Gearbolt* a hidden gem of the genre.





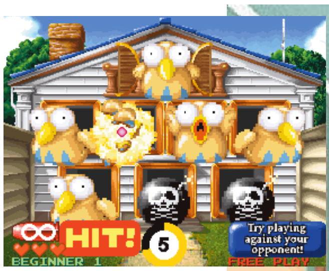


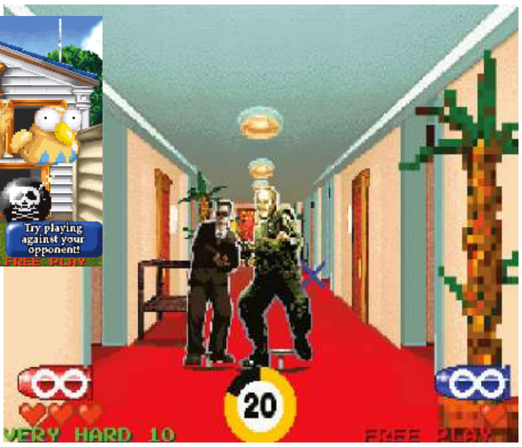
THE WARIOWARE OF LIGHTGUN GAMES

2 POINT BLANK

DEVELOPER: Namco **YEAR:** 1994 **PLATFORMS:** Arcade, PlayStation

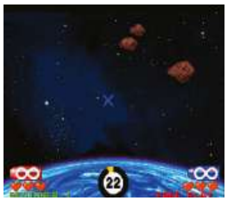
■ Essentially a collection of lightgun-controlled minigames, *Point Blank* asks one or two players to shoot their way through a series of increasingly silly shooting galleries. The games span a wide variety of challenges that may demand pinpoint accuracy or rapid fire, and reward sharpshooters who can identify and nail a target in the blink of an eye. The pace can be so blisteringly fast it induces giddiness, and when it inevitably tricks you into shooting the wrong target, you'll be having such a good time you'll just have to laugh.



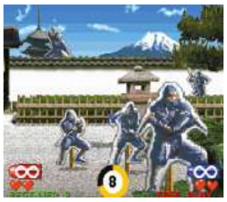


SHOOTING GALLERY GALLERY

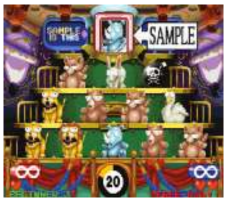
A selection of Point Blank's best minigames



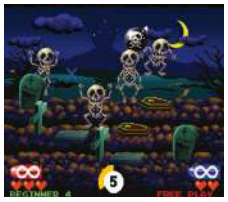
SHOOT EACH METEORITE BEFORE THEY REACH EARTH



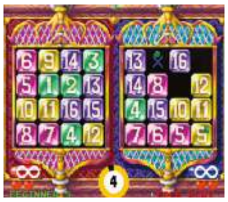
SHOOT NINJAS



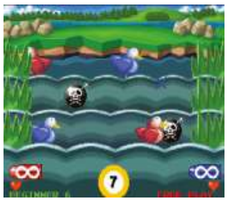
SHOOT THE MATCHING TARGET



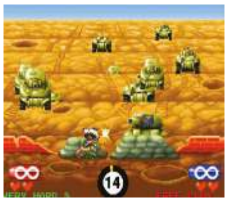
SHOOT SKELETONS



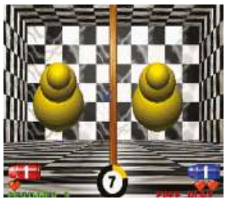
SHOOT THE NUMBERS IN ORDER



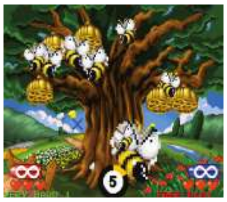
SHOOT DUCKS OF YOUR COLOUR



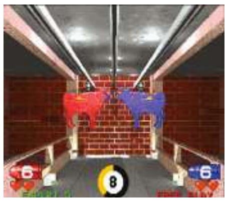
SHOOT THE TANKS TO PROTECT DR DAN AND DR DON



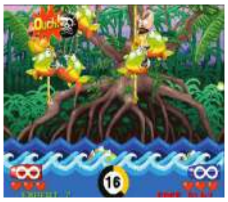
SHOOT ALL THREE BALLS WITH ONE SHOT



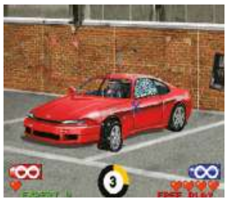
SHOOT THE BEEHIVE AND HIT THE BEES



AIM FOR THE BLINKING PART



PROTECT DR DAN AND DR DON



SHOOT THE CAR 120 TIMES

LIFE
GS
PLAYER 1
MISSION LEVEL 1
LIFE
GS
PLAYER 2
XM-2119
XM-2119

LIFE
GS
PLAYER 1
11490
MISSION LEVEL 1
4790
LIFE
GS
PLAYER 2
QUICK SHOT
QUICK SHOT
CharlieBlue
XM-2119
XM-2119

We're in battle.

MISSION LEVEL 1
3990
LIFE
GS
PLAYER 2
XM-2119

NUMBER ONE WITH A BULLET

1 GHOST SQUAD

DEVELOPER Sega/Hitmaker **YEAR** 2004 **PLATFORMS** Arcade, Wii

You may scoff to see a game from 2004 (a mere 18 years ago) top a retro gaming list, especially when that game isn't from one of the iconic series in the genre. But, trust us, this sublime, late-era lightgun game represents the apex of the genre, combining the greatest elements of *Virtua Cop* and *Time Crisis* with decades of Sega's expertise to create a pure arcade joy from start to finish.

The brilliance of *Ghost Squad* is its sheer depth and variety. If you're looking for a tight high-score challenge that rewards sharpshooting crack shots, then you'll find one here. Precise headshots and no misses grant you higher scores while those truly worthy of the *Ghost Squad* can climb the leaderboards by coldly shooting two in the chest and one in the head. Which is no easy feat in such a fast-paced game!

Those who prefer a sense of progress, could use an IC Card in arcades to actually save their character data and level up with experience points gained from skillful play. With each level, players earn a greater military rank and unlock new costumes to show off or just look silly. We love nothing more than to storm Air Force One's hijackers while dressed head to toe in a camp cowboy outfit.

Easily the greatest feature of *Ghost Squad*, is its Tactical Decisions, a series of choices that pop-up mid-mission and offer multiple routes through the stage. The number of choices expands as you complete and level up more stages, offering great replay value, and allow you to enjoy several new areas as well as gameplay variations such as hostage rescue, sniper missions and bomb defusing.

Mastering all the routes makes *Ghost Squad* one of the most replayable games of its kind, but it's the moment-to-moment gameplay that keeps you coming back for more. At every second, you'll feel the hand of Sega's arcade masters, crafting brilliant moments that test your reactions, reward practice, surprise you or just put a huge smile on your face. Everything that's great about the genre is right here in *Ghost Squad* and if you love lightgun games at all, it's a must-play. *

ROUTE TO KILL

The multiple paths of Ghost Squad's first stage

START

BACK-UP
Go around the outside of the house and prevent enemies from reaching the door.

TRAP DISARM
Defuse the bomb by snipping wires in the correct order before it explodes. Be quick!

DETAIN HOSTAGES
Hold the action button over each hostage to cuff them up before they get away.

GIVE COVER
Move up to the second floor and provide covering fire to Squad B.

ASSAULT
The default path through the lower level of the hotel.

DRAMATIC ENTRY
Clear out the basement within a strict time limit.

SNIPE
Snipe all of the enemies on the balcony as quickly as you can.

DIVERSION ATTACK
Attack the hotel rooms from outside by shooting through the windows.

SMOKE GRENADE
Use thermo vision to clear the smoke-filled hotel room.

TERRORIST RAID
A standard shooting path through the hotel, with no failure state.

DETAIN HOSTAGES
You've more hostages to cuff up. Don't shoot them, obviously!

BOSS
Take out the brilliantly named Alex Havoc by locking on to his helicopter with a missile launcher.

DualShock

» **MANUFACTURER:** PlayStation » **YEAR:** 1997
» **COST:** £24.99 (launch), £25+ (today, boxed), £3+ (today, unboxed)

You may be surprised to learn that the DualShock was not Sony's first analogue control pad – that honour is held by the Dual Analog Controller, released some months prior to the DualShock in 1997. That controller introduced twin analogue sticks in the centre of the controller, larger L2 and R2 buttons, and longer hand grips. The Japanese model also included a single rumble motor, although this wasn't included in the international versions. As well as regular analogue and digital controller operation, it included a mode compatible with flight-stick games.

The DualShock revised the design, doing away with the longer hand grips and the flight-stick mode. It also replaced the concave analogue sticks with convex, rubber textured ones. The most notable new addition was a pair of rumble motors, this time in all regions. The DualShock was popular with developers and players, and replaced the original controller in new hardware bundles from 1998 onwards. The iconic body shape would persist through the PS2 and PS3 eras too, before eventually being replaced when the PS4 launched in 2013. *

ESSENTIAL GAME

APE ESCAPE

While it doesn't have the same following as *Crash Bandicoot* or *Spyro The Dragon* today, *Ape Escape* was a premier platform game for the PlayStation. The game tasked you with running about and recapturing – you guessed it – escaped apes, in environments that were larger and better looking than most found on Sony's first console. *Ape Escape* isn't essential for DualShock owners so much as the inverse, though. As the first PlayStation game to require analogue controls, you'll be completely out of luck if you try playing it with the standard pad.

SONY
PlayStation
SELECT
START
ANALOG

SONY
PlayStation
SELECT
ANALOG
R

DualShock fact

■ If you're ever short of PS2 controllers, the original DualShock can be used to play many native PS2 games, as well as PlayStation games running via backwards compatibility.

SUPPLIED BY **EVAN AMOS**

THE MAKING OF

DONKEY KONG LAND

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY ON THE GAME BOY? ARE YOU BANANAS?! RETRO GAMER SPEAKS TO LEAD PROGRAMMER PAUL MACHACEK AND MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGNER GRAEME NORGATE ON THE GORILLA-SIZED TASK OF BRINGING THE TITLE THAT PUSHED THE SNES TO ITS LIMITS TO THE SMALL SCREEN WITH DONKEY KONG LAND

WORDS BY BENJAMIN HAYHOE

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** RARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1995
- » **PLATFORM:** GAME BOY
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BATTLETOADS
SYSTEM: NES
YEAR: 1991

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY
SYSTEM: SNES
YEAR: 1994

GOLDENEYE 007 (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: N64
YEAR: 1997

Ask a SNES fan what their favourite platformer is, and chances are they'll respond with either *Super Mario World* or *Donkey Kong Country*. Mario's games had defined the genre for over a decade, but the *Donkey Kong Country* series was the new kid on the block under the development of British studio Rare. *DKC* pushed the limits of what the SNES could do graphically, thanks to cutting-edge pre-rendering techniques, but also in terms of audio production due to David Wise's techno-wizardry and innovative use of single-cycle waveforms to create layered sounds from tiny amounts of data.

So when [Rare cofounder] Tim Stamper approached Paul Machacek in 1994 about developing a direct port of *DKC* for the modest Game Boy, you can see the challenge that was to be faced. Undeterred, Paul decided to take things one step further.

"In 1991 when Tim asked me to do a Game Boy *Battletoads* title, he actually asked me to port the in-production NES game. I suggested that, as I'd have to write everything from scratch anyway, if we did some extra design work, we could have a new sibling title for limited extra effort," Paul recalls. "I felt that a straight port would not sell to people who already had the NES game, but a related offshoot game could, which Tim agreed with. It worked, and that original *Battletoads* Game Boy game sold well. So in 1994 when Tim asked if I'd do a *DKC* port, I argued the same case and he agreed, although the 'bit of extra design work' would clearly be more substantial here."

Substantial is correct, as *Donkey Kong Land* would become far removed from its SNES predecessor. It shares a similar sense of identity with the original game, but *DKL* featured entirely new level designs, overworlds, mechanics, enemies and bosses as well.

"*DKC* was stunning; it was the first-ever fully rendered videogame, a year or so before Pixar achieved a similar movie feat with *Toy Story*, and despite releasing towards the end of the SNES life cycle, everyone knew it was groundbreaking and an absolute standout title," says Paul. "But if you have a great game and want to do another one then you don't create a completely different product."

Paul was on his own to begin with, coding from scratch using Kev Bayliss' original *DKC* artwork, but the *DKL* team grew over time to more than 15 people (the size of a subsequent N64 title team), which included a number of

▶

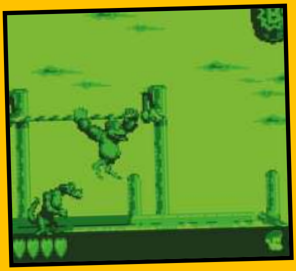
> "DKC WAS STUNNING; IT WAS THE FIRST FULLY RENDERED VIDEOGAME, A YEAR OR SO BEFORE PIXAR ACHIEVED A SIMILAR MOVIE FEAT WITH TOY STORY"
> **PAUL MACHACEK**

FURTHER ADVENTURES

DONKEY KONG'S LIFE ON THE GAME BOY

DONKEY KONG LAND 2

■ *Donkey Kong Land* was a very different game to *Donkey Kong Country*, but *DKL 2* played it safe by being much more like its console variant. It did an excellent job, but fans were left scratching their heads after the first game had offered such a new experience.

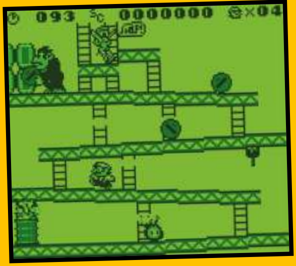


DONKEY KONG LAND 3

■ The third *DKL* release felt like a hybrid of the previous two. It used the same environments and enemies as *Dixie Kong's Double Trouble* but added lots of new content and levels. The *DKL* series ended on a high with this one.

DONKEY KONG LAND 3 (GBC)

■ On 28 January 2000, two years after the original NA/EU release, Japan finally saw *Donkey Kong Land 3* make its debut with an updated Game Boy Color edition. Titled *Donkey Kong GB: Dinky Kong & Dixie*, this colour version would sacrifice some of its animations and dialogue.

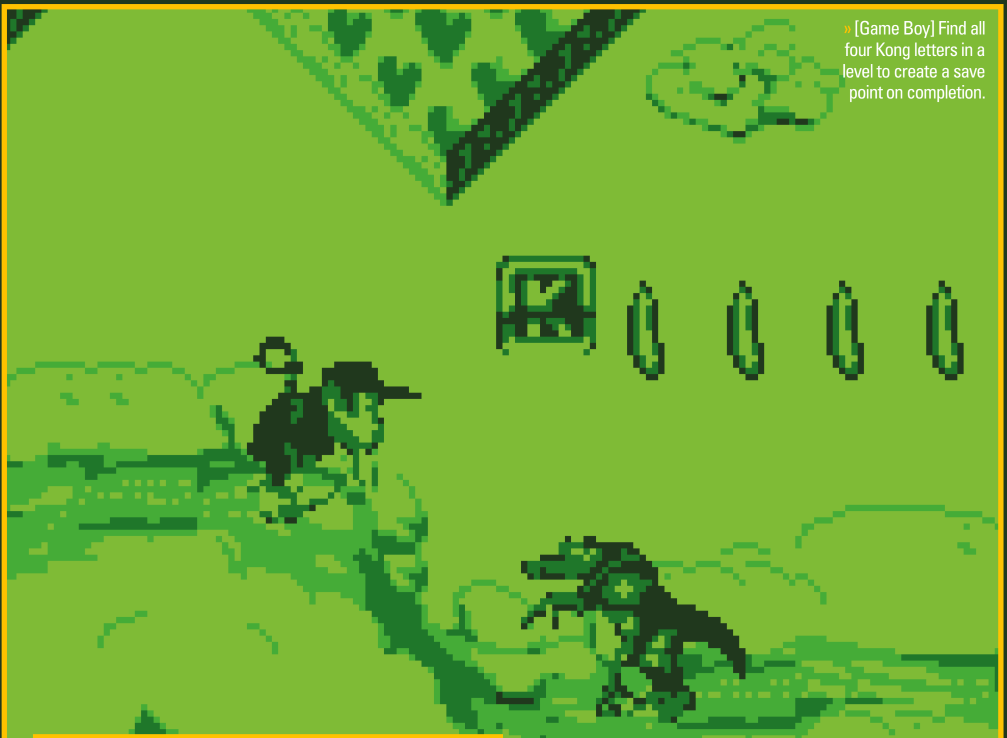


DONKEY KONG (94)

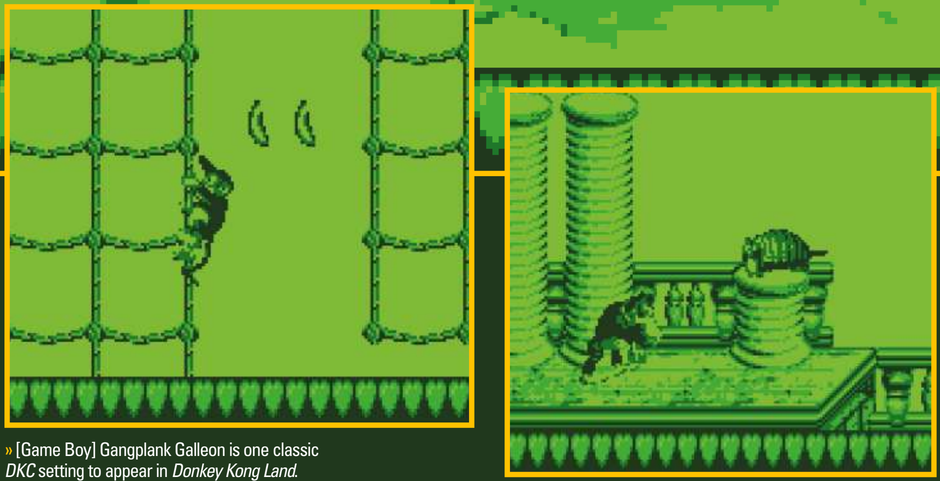
■ Before the *Donkey Kong Land* series took off, Nintendo published a much more faithful sequel to the original arcade game with *Donkey Kong* (1994). The result was a chest-thumping success, packed with new features but retaining that classic arcade feel. Top banana!

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY (GB)

■ As the original *DKL* was so different to its 16-bit counterpart, it still made perfect sense to convert *Donkey Kong Country* to the Game Boy Color. Also released in Japan as *Donkey Kong 2001*, this remake offered an excellent recreation of the original SNES game.



» [Game Boy] Find all four Kong letters in a level to create a save point on completion.



» [Game Boy] Gangplank Galleon is one classic *DKC* setting to appear in *Donkey Kong Land.*

artists who spent a lot of time creating new characters, models and imagery for the new level designs as well.

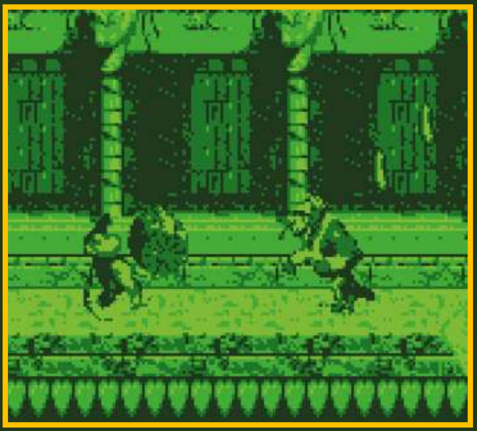
"DK bounces through a jungle and collects bananas, so we're going to do that," Paul says. "However, that didn't stop us from continuing the level design of *DKC* and generating new ones in new settings, just as was done for the *DKC 2/3* sequels on SNES."

The game **soon expanded with new territories like Chimpanzee Clouds and Big Ape City.** Gangplank Galleon is often cited as one of the most iconic locales from *DKC 2,* but it was actually *DKL* that fleshed-out this swashbuckling domain first, and Paul says the team took full advantage of the unique opportunities that these settings offered.

"When it came to some of the new level settings, we had a platform game, so how do we find a way to extend the platform experience beyond the jungle? Well, a city skyscraper building site can be a platformer level, and a pirate ship with rigging to climb on can add another dimension beyond just jumping across gaps. We had the freedom to add settings that could support a style of gameplay mechanic, and we wanted to differentiate from what had already been done."

DKL maintained the same quality in level design that players had come to expect: great platforming sections that felt fluid and challenging, hidden bonus rooms and collectibles that required lateral thinking or daring feats of dexterity to reach, and that sense of environmental identity that all side-scrolling *Donkey Kong* games provide.

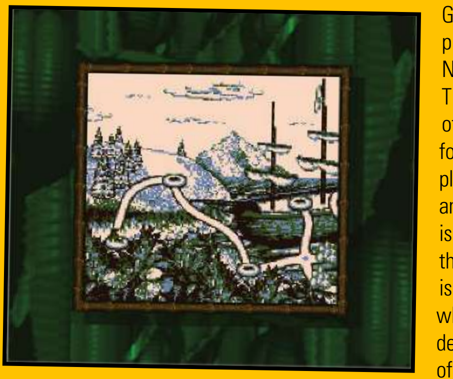
There were newly implemented mechanics too, the most interesting of these being the important role that the collectable KONG letters found in each level would play this time around. Unlike in *DKC* where collecting all four letters would give the player an extra life, in *DKL* your reward



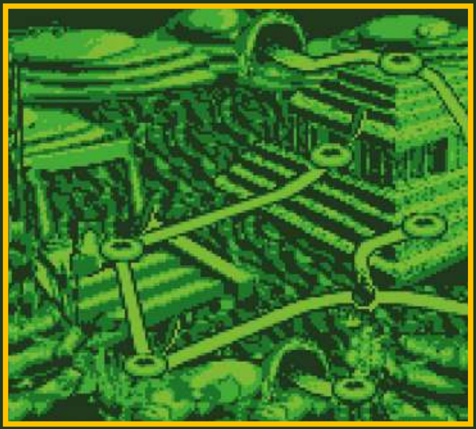
» [Game Boy] Diddy Kong will need to get creative to take out Krusha. Barrels help.

SUPER GAME, BOY!

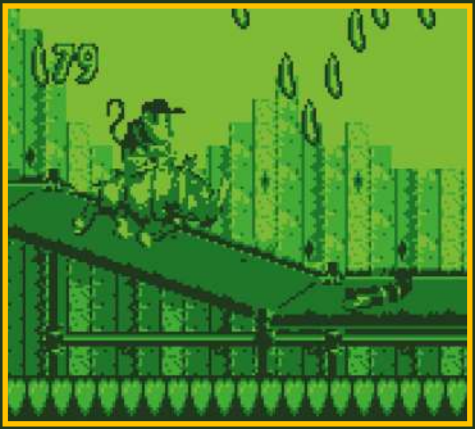
DONKEY KONG LAND WENT BIG AND WENT HOME



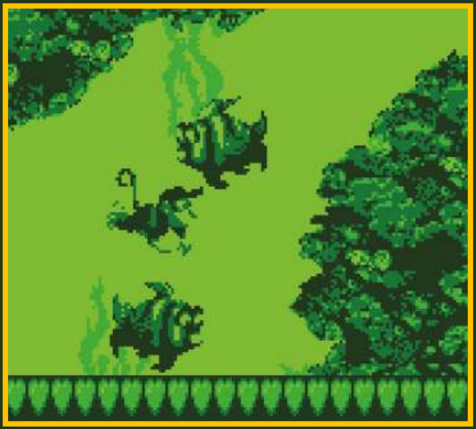
■ The Super Game Boy for the SNES is an amazing peripheral that allows Game Boy cartridges to be played on the big screen. In addition, it also provides a host of different technical and visual benefits for the player. By playing *Donkey Kong Land* through the Super Game Boy, players are treated to a wide array of different colour palette options, adding an impressive amount of visual diversity to the limited scope of the Game Boy's original green screen, and if the player really wants to get into the swing of things, they can also turn on a special jungle-themed border. Most practically though, playing through the Super Game Boy allows the player to use the Super Nintendo controller. This invaluable upgrade offers maximum comfort for the game's fiddly platforming gameplay and the console d-pad is far superior to that of the Game Boy, which is especially useful when dealing with the demanding precision of *DKL*'s primate companions. *Donkey Kong Land* may be a handheld title, but by playing through this well-utilised peripheral, players are at least able to enjoy some of the creature comforts afforded to its big brother *Donkey Kong Country.*



» [Game Boy] *Donkey Kong Land* has four delightful overworlds filled with levels to explore.



» [Game Boy] Nobody has ever gone wrong following a trail of bananas. Just watch your step.



» [Game Boy] Meet Fangfish, a brand-new enemy who's just as friendly as he sounds.

would be an invaluable automatic save at the end of the stage.

"Whilst I'd just written a few notoriously hard *Battletoad* games, the scope and scale of *DKL* were on another level, and you had to do something to make it easier for players to get through it, otherwise they'd just get frustrated," Paul says. "I was pushing for a softer failure/retry scenario to make the game more easily completable."

This was a fascinating design choice, as it meant that the player could opt to not collect the KONG letters, making completing each level easier. The trade-off, however, was that if they ran out of lives, there's theoretically no limit to how far they'd be set back, placing more onus on the player to make things easier for themselves.

Despite new additions, allowances did have to be made due to the limited memory available on the Game Boy hardware. Only one Kong character could appear on the screen at once, for example. Bonus areas were limited to three per level, and only two of the full roster of animal friends were included. But these are all forgivable omissions when you consider just how good *DKL* looks. The character sprites are almost identical to the SNES and the smoothness of the animations is mind-boggling for the hardware.

But what made *DKC* a joy to play, apart from its incredible visuals and sound, was the way it felt, with great aerial control and surprisingly dextrous handling for a big ape, and this was something that Paul ensured was carried over to *DKL*.

"Yeah, I worked really hard at that," he says. "A lot of effort went into making Donkey Kong move well, and it went hand in hand with the incredible smoothness of animation achieved through pre-rendering, but we also ensured that it worked at the slight re-scale we needed to do for the smaller Game Boy screen. Being fired out of barrels, to fly to an unseen place, possibly sweeping up an arc of bananas en-route and then landing in another barrel that spins and re-fires you is all part of it."

The Game Boy's screen size certainly posed its own challenges during development, with Paul noting three key differences when compared with the CRT TVs people were playing their console on. "Firstly, it was a somewhat lower resolution, so if we pre-rendered a jungle tree or banana out at the same resolution as on SNES, it would appear proportionally larger and you wouldn't be able to see as far ahead when Donkey Kong was running, giving you less time to react to things coming on screen quickly."

To help ease the burden of leaping into the unknown too often, the team utilised a number of well-placed banana trails as guidance, and there soon develops an instinctive familiarity with the game's movement, where you'd soon be anticipating jumps akin to some sixth sense for *Donkey Kong* level design.

"Secondly, the LCD was really blurry/laggy when scrolling which also made it harder to see what was happening and respond quickly," though Paul states there were some tricks to reducing this issue, such as the ongoing downloading of *DK*'s sprites being prioritised over the sprites of baddies, "And finally, with only four shades of greeny-grey, objects didn't stand out as well against backgrounds as they did on SNES with its wider colour palettes."

"I LOVED WORKING WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE GAME BOY'S FOUR SOUND CHANNELS"
GRAEME NORGATE

However, as important as the visuals are in a *DKC* game, any fan would place just as much importance on its music and sound design. David Wise's *DKC* soundtracks are legendary, but Rare's new recruit at the time, Graeme Norgate, worked alongside David to convert the pieces for the Game Boy, and the results were very impressive.

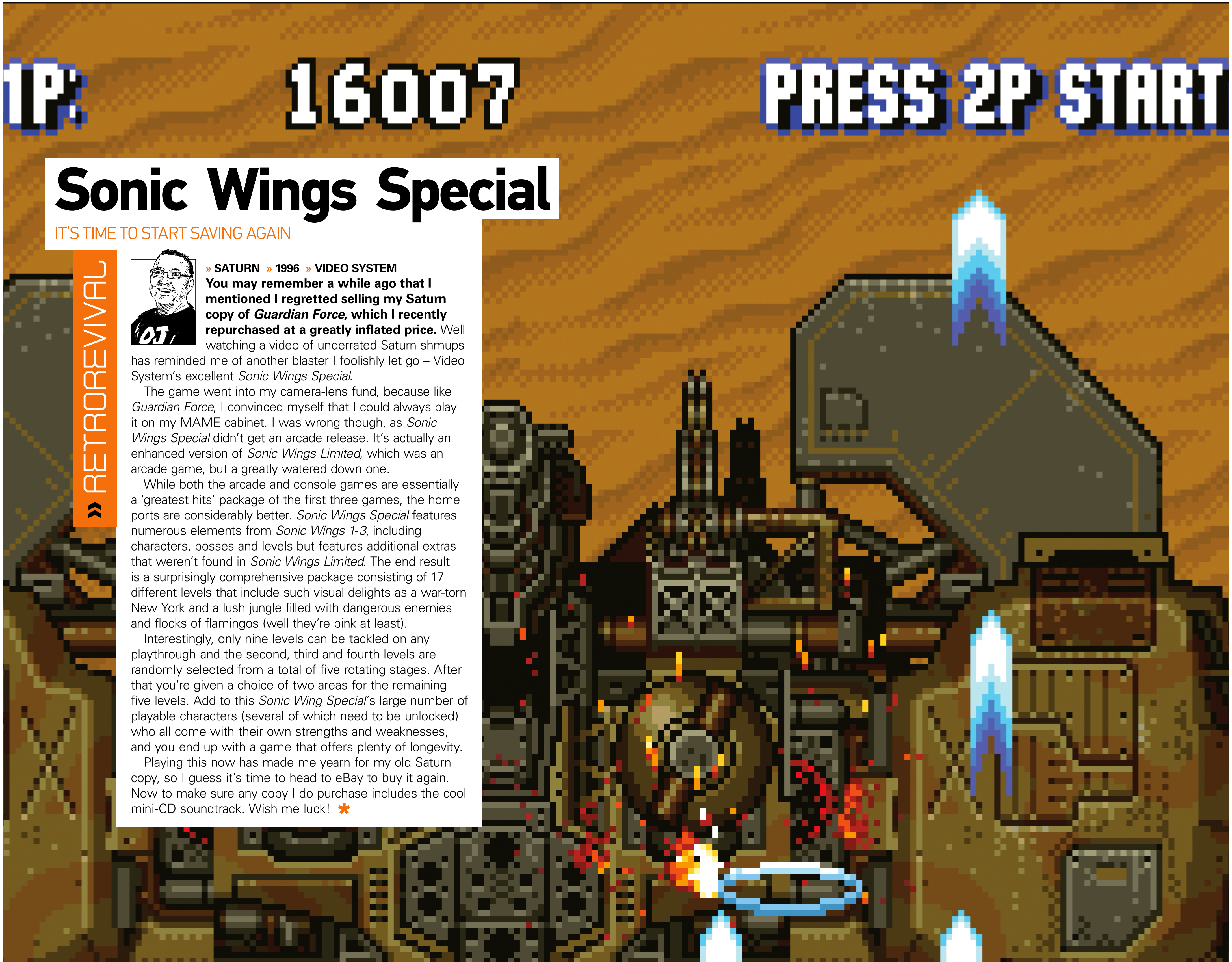
"For me, it was just a dream project. I loved working within the confines of the Game Boy's four sound channels. Even with just four channels and limited waveforms, there's still a lot that can be achieved," Graeme says. "David had years of experience working on the NES and I was brought up with the Commodore 64's three sound channels, so we were used to getting the best out of limited hardware."

Again, some sacrifices had to be made — the four channels represented half of the eight available on the SNES, meaning that the lush pad chords of *Aquatic Ambience*, for example, had to be removed. "It's a case of alluding to the original version rather than trying to outright copy it," says Graeme.

But we believe this to be a disservice to what was accomplished. Though the complexity of the music is reduced, the game is full of recognisable hits, from faithful recreations of *Gangplank Galleon* and *DK Island Swing*, to brand-new tracks created to match the vibe of its many new stages. It's a result of the sound team focusing on, above all else, the melody of those pieces.

"Rare always had the mantra 'melody is king,'" Graeme explains. "All the musicians at Rare revered John Williams. Name any film by him and I would bet you can sing the theme over 40 years later. Now try that with any film from the last ten to twenty years. How's that working out for you?"

After a year of development, *Donkey Kong Land* released in 1995, approximately seven months after *Donkey Kong Country* took the world by storm. Though it might not be the first *DK* game that springs to mind, *Donkey Kong Land* was the Game Boy hit that Rare hoped for, selling almost four million copies – incidentally the most successful *Donkey Kong* would ever be on the Game Boy. Paul, Graeme and the rest of the team ensured that it set itself apart in every way – even the cartridge was a striking banana yellow – and as such, this miniature series would go on to set its own miniature legacy, and Rare's developers demonstrated once again their inimitable philosophy that, as far as they're concerned, nothing is impossible. ★



Sonic Wings Special

IT'S TIME TO START SAVING AGAIN

» SATURN » 1996 » VIDEO SYSTEM

You may remember a while ago that I mentioned I regretted selling my Saturn copy of *Guardian Force*, which I recently repurchased at a greatly inflated price. Well watching a video of underrated Saturn shmups has reminded me of another blaster I foolishly let go – Video System's excellent *Sonic Wings Special*.

The game went into my camera-lens fund, because like *Guardian Force*, I convinced myself that I could always play it on my MAME cabinet. I was wrong though, as *Sonic Wings Special* didn't get an arcade release. It's actually an enhanced version of *Sonic Wings Limited*, which was an arcade game, but a greatly watered down one.

While both the arcade and console games are essentially a 'greatest hits' package of the first three games, the home ports are considerably better. *Sonic Wings Special* features numerous elements from *Sonic Wings 1-3*, including characters, bosses and levels but features additional extras that weren't found in *Sonic Wings Limited*. The end result is a surprisingly comprehensive package consisting of 17 different levels that include such visual delights as a war-torn New York and a lush jungle filled with dangerous enemies and flocks of flamingos (well they're pink at least).

Interestingly, only nine levels can be tackled on any playthrough and the second, third and fourth levels are randomly selected from a total of five rotating stages. After that you're given a choice of two areas for the remaining five levels. Add to this *Sonic Wing Special*'s large number of playable characters (several of which need to be unlocked) who all come with their own strengths and weaknesses, and you end up with a game that offers plenty of longevity.

Playing this now has made me yearn for my old Saturn copy, so I guess it's time to head to eBay to buy it again. Now to make sure any copy I do purchase includes the cool mini-CD soundtrack. Wish me luck! *

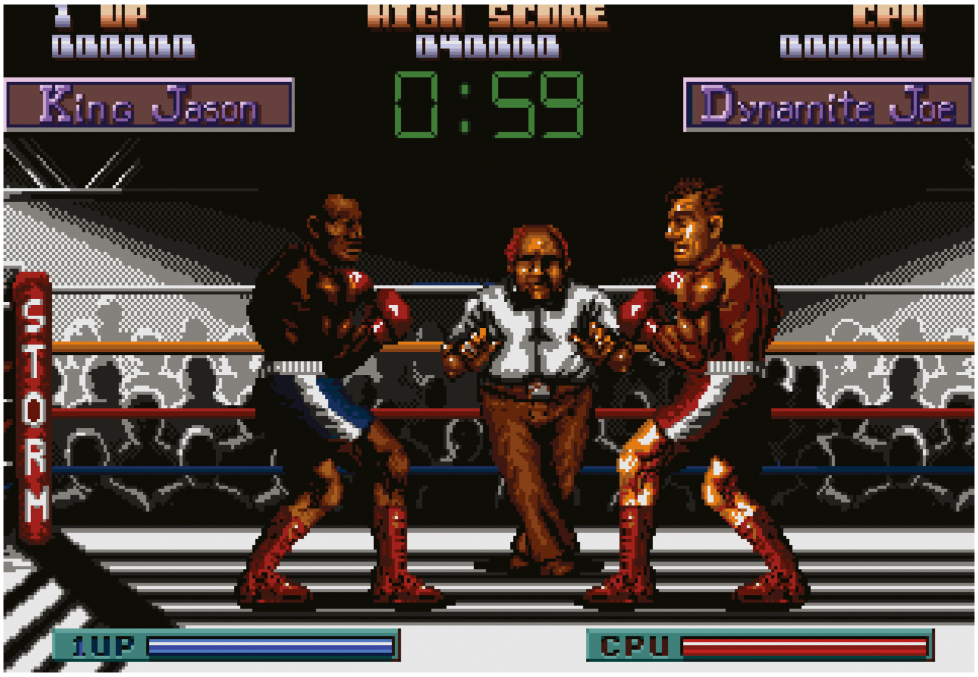
B
B
CREDITS: 2

SIDE
Studio Profile
Low Noise
60
30 Minutes per side

THE SALES CURVE

In a male-dominated industry, businesswoman Jane Cavanagh was able to create The Sales Curve from nothing in the late-Eighties. The company became highly regarded for its impressive arcade conversions and original efforts like SWIV. The Sales Curve was built into a hugely successful multi-million-pound UK videogames company that became a plc by the mid-Nineties. How was it done?

WORDS BY RICHARD HEWISON


1 UP
000000
HIGH SCORE
040000
CPU
000000
King Jason
0:59
Dynamite Joe
STORM
1UP
CPU

» [Atari ST] *Final Blow* was a decent attempt to convert a coin-op that featured huge character sprites.

EXIT
The Structurally Insecure Pier
Exit to The Jetty

3
25600
0
HERE! TAKE THIS LIFE ENERGY AND GOOD LUCK.

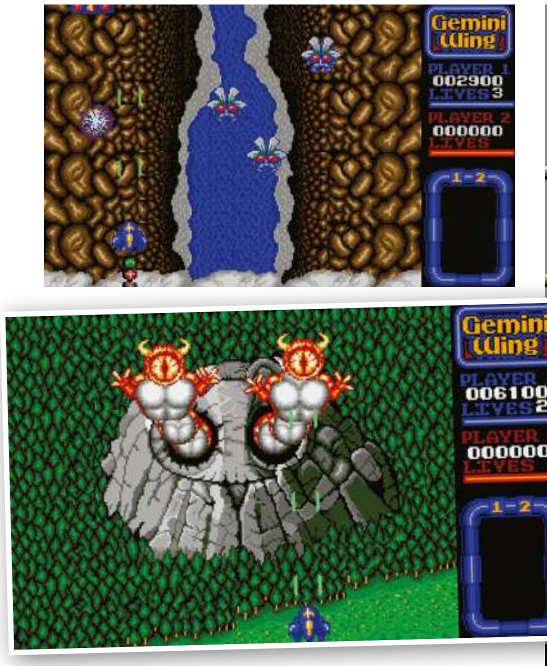
Jane Cavanagh worked at Firebird Software in the mid-Eighties as a business development manager, getting its games into overseas territories and signing several arcade titles for home conversions, including *Bubble Bobble* and *Flying Shark* from Taito. Jane then got the opportunity to set up on her own in late 1987, as she explains.

"The original plan was to represent companies who didn't have any presence in the UK. Our first client was France Image Logiciel (FIL). They wanted me to acquire some arcade licences and develop products based upon those licences, which they would then distribute around Europe."

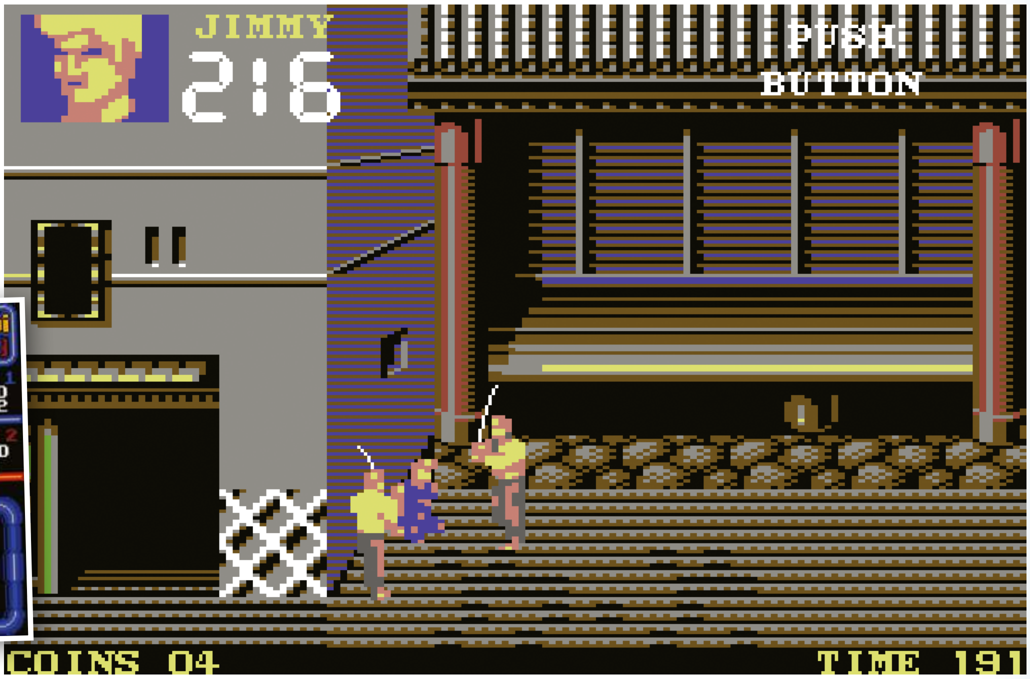
Among the titles The Sales Curve signed were *Silkworm* and *Gemini Wing* from Tecmo, *Continental Circus* and *The Ninja Warriors* from Taito, and *Shinobi* from Sega. She needed to find someone to run the development side, and news that Jane was looking for a development director reached Darren Melbourne, who had only recently left defunct games publisher Nexus.

"Obviously I thought I could do it," laughs Darren. "To get the job I basically told her a pack of lies! I said I knew everyone in the industry, that I could easily do it standing on my head, and thankfully she gave me a chance."

50 Lombard Road in Battersea became The Sales Curve's office, and at the start there was just Darren and Jane. Shortly afterwards, Graham Wayne joined from Telecomsoft, and when various arcade boards arrived, Darren knew just the person to get them working. Having worked in a hobbyist board-game shop, Matt Spall had a passion for gaming, and he



» [Amiga] Bright, colourful and cartoony-style graphics made *Gemini Wing* less attractive to some arcade shooter fans.



» [C64] Despite much smaller sprites, the Commodore 64 version of *Double Dragon 3: The Rosetta Stone* played really well.

regularly attended the local London computer shows, getting to know people in the industry. He was working as a postman in London's West End when opportunity came knocking.

"One afternoon, I was just back home from a morning's postal delivery and my doorbell rang," he says. "To my surprise, Darren Melbourne was standing there. He'd just started working at The Sales Curve, about five minutes' walk from my place, next to Battersea heliport, and he asked if I fancied coming into the office to have a look around. I jumped at the chance."

The office only contained a few desks and an Apple Macintosh. In one corner was an arcade cabinet and several arcade boards. Where Matt shone was his understanding of electronics, and he got working on the various JAMMA arcade boards that had been licensed. Initially, Matt visited the office a couple of times a week, whilst continuing with his early morning postal shift, as he explains. "I finished as a postie by one o'clock, so I was usually at The Sales Curve an hour later, often still wearing my uniform!"

Darren meanwhile was out and about visiting developers across the UK. "I spent a lot of my time on trains visiting development companies I said I already knew but didn't, including Imagitec, Software Creations and Probe," says Darren.

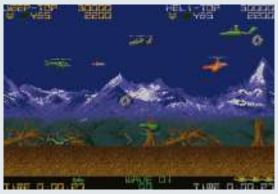
Working arcade boards were soon dispatched to the various developers sub-contracted to write the home conversions. However, six months into its contract with FIL, The Sales Curve faced a huge and potentially disastrous problem when its sole client hit financial difficulties, and FIL's French parent company Thomson called in the receivers. "That was a really hairy moment," recalls

▶

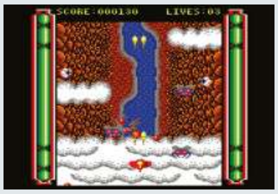
> "The original plan was to represent companies who didn't have any presence in the UK
>
> **Jane Cavanagh**

TIME
COINS
PRESS
START
Weapon Shop

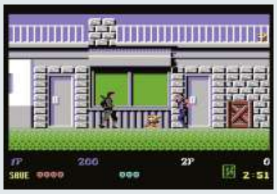
SELECTED TIMELINE



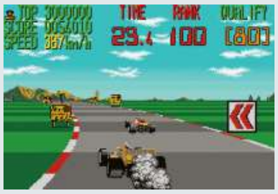
1989
SILKWORM
Atari ST, Various
■ The Sales Curve's first in-house arcade coin-op conversion, and a hugely enjoyable game for every popular format.



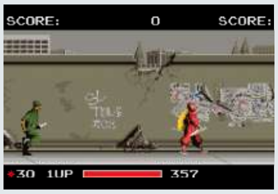
1989
GEMINI WING
Amstrad CPC, Various
■ It's maybe not the best-known coin-op, but this is a decent conversion from Imagitec Design across multiple platforms.



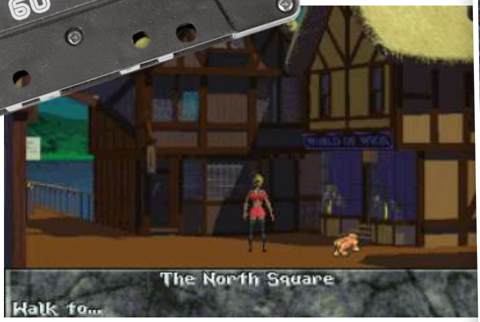
1989
SHINOBI
Commodore 64, Various
■ The best of the *Shinobi* conversions was produced by Random Access for the C64. It's a great conversion of a great game.



1989
CONTINENTAL CIRCUS
Amiga, Various
■ This was by far the best externally developed coin-op conversion that The Sales Curve released.



1989
THE NINJA WARRIORS
Amiga, Various
■ This was a triple-screen arcade coin-op conversion, featuring uninterrupted level loading on 16-bit. A fantastic effort.



» [PC] The point-and-click adventure *Kingdom O'Magic* featured rendered graphics in a fantasy setting.

▶ Jane. "FIL were due to pay their contractual obligations to us, the developers and to the Japanese licence holders, and I had to quickly work out what to do next."

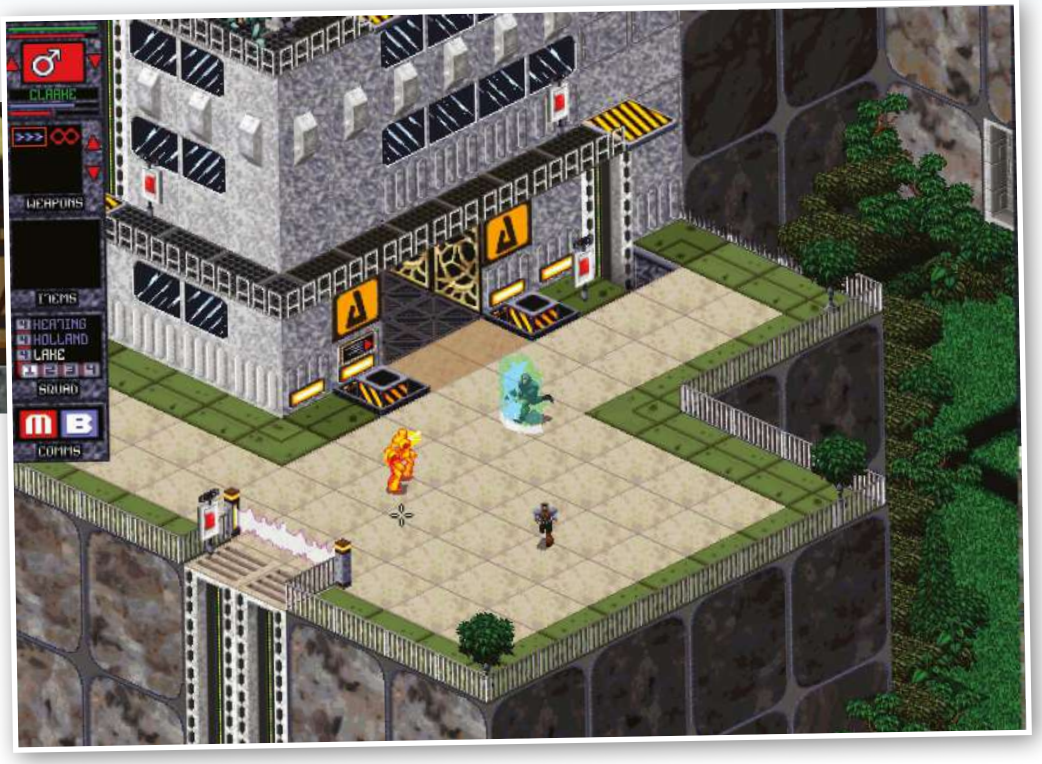
With the future of her young company already in jeopardy, Jane attended several meetings with the liquidators, and persuaded them to sign over the benefits of the licences, what had been paid so far, and the benefit of the unfinished games, and that enabled Jane to fund the continued development of the home conversions and pay off the balance owed for the licensing fees. She then got in touch with Nick Alexander at Virgin Games and struck a distribution deal for the games in development. The Sales Curve also negotiated deals with Swiss-based publisher Linel, and US publisher Accolade to keep work coming in on more than one front.

"We were working with Imagitec in Mirfield on the *Gemini Wing* conversions, and I was also visiting other developers including Catalyst Coders," remembers Darren. "A few of the Catalyst guys were looking to break away, and I mentioned this to Imagitec, and they said, 'Why don't you move up here, we'll supply the work, and you develop the games.' It seemed a marvellous idea, so I plucked up the courage to tell Jane about this amazing opportunity. She listened, then responded saying, 'Why don't you do that for me?'"

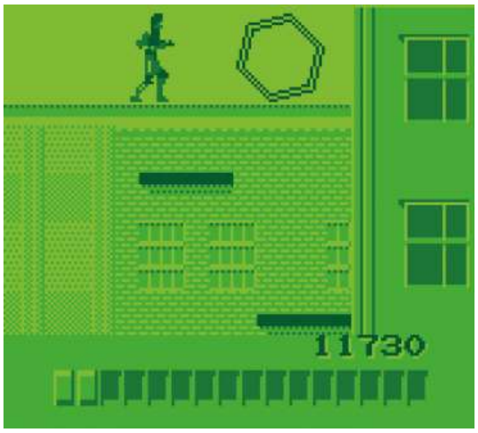
Darren believed that was an even better idea, but the developers at Catalyst had reservations about working for The Sales Curve in London, and rejected the offer, remaining steadfast on moving to Yorkshire. Darren explained to Jane that he was going ahead with the move, and so his time at The Sales Curve ended rather abruptly. After Darren's departure, Dan Marchant was quickly recruited from Telecomsoft as the new development manager, and Simon Pick was hired to run the development studio side, recruiting all the programmers and artists they needed to form the in-house team Random Access, including Ned Langman, Rob Henderson, Ronald Pieket Weeserik and John Croudy. It then started working on converting Tecmo's *Silkworm*.

Binary Design was busy completing versions of *Shinobi*, but the Commodore 64 version had to be brought in-house, and with money quite tight, Jane made the difficult decision to cancel a couple of the lesser-known coin-op conversions, including Pantheon's work on SNK's *Paddle Mania* and Random Access' early

> "The guys who developed Silkworm and The Ninja Warriors and Saint Dragon wanted to do something original
> **Dan Marchant**



» [PC] Paul Darrow and Jacqueline Pearce provided voice acting for the intro to *Gender Wars*.



» [Game Boy] *The Lawnmower Man* even managed to get ported to the Nintendo Game Boy.

1991

DOUBLE DRAGON 3 – THE ROSETTA STONE

Amiga, Various

■ A dose of beat-'em-up arcade conversion perfection that worked particularly well on the 8-bit systems.

1991

ROD-LAND

Amiga, Various

■ A wonderful arcade conversion especially on 16-bit, with cutesy colourful graphics and simple gameplay.

1992

BIG RUN

Amiga, Atari ST

■ An easy to play arcade racer that was big on fun and small on crashes!

1992

INDY HEAT

Amiga, Atari ST

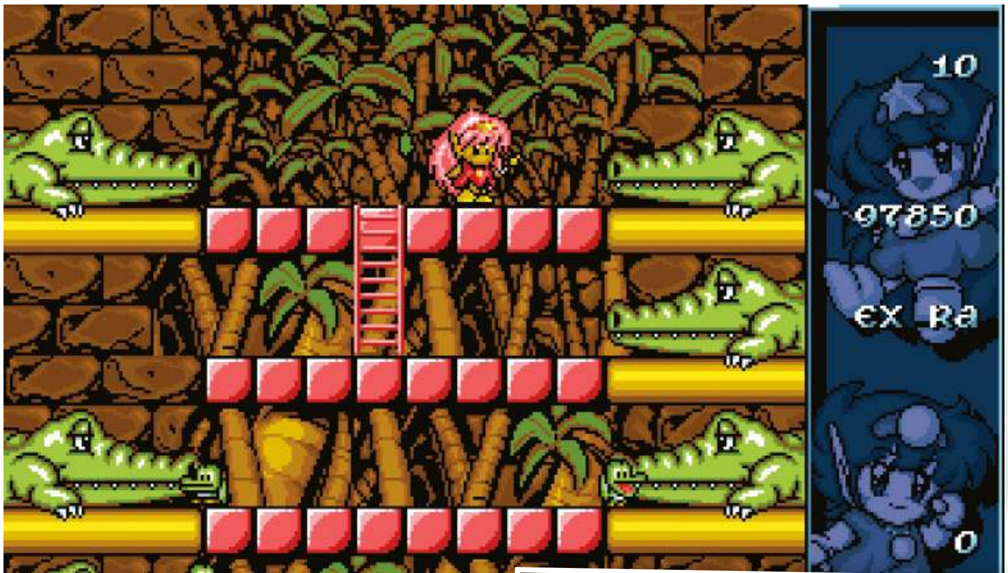
■ One of The Sales Curve's last ever arcade coin-op conversions, and a nice little racer to boot.

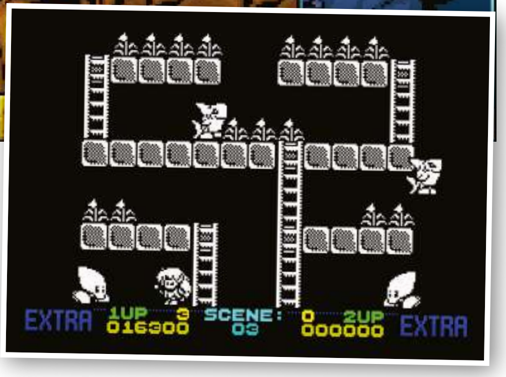
1992

TRODDLERS

Amiga, IBM PC, SNES

■ Despite being heavily influenced by *Lemmings*, this puzzle game was still a fun addition to that genre.





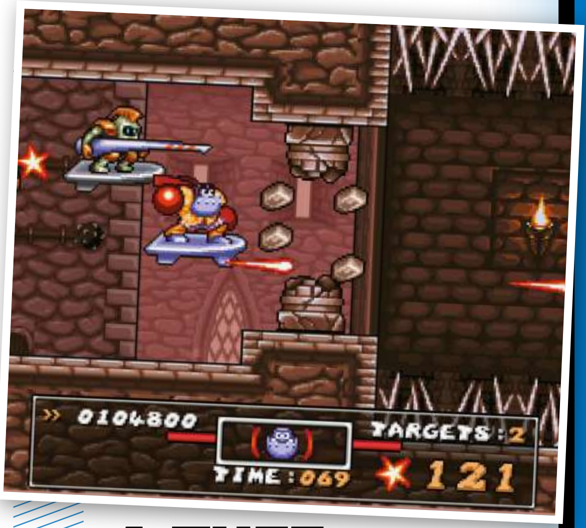
» [ZX Spectrum] Even with a lack of colour, this *Rod-Land* conversion was impressive on the humble Speccy.

work on Irem's *Kid Niki: Radical Ninja*. Virgin Games published *Silkworm*, *Gemini Wing*, *Shinobi*, *The Ninja Warriors* and *Continental Circus* in 1989, with the latter written by Teque London. All the games were available on the usual 8-bit micros, as well as versions for the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga. Most of the titles sold very well, with *The Ninja Warriors* and *Silkworm* conversions by Random Access particularly standing out.

More coin-op licences followed, including *Final Blow, Rod-Land* and *Double Dragon 3: The Rosetta Stone.* By then, Jane had decided to also take on publishing duties, with the creation of the Storm label. To secure a new distribution partner, The Sales Curve daringly placed a never-since-repeated advert in the industry newspaper, *Computer Trade Weekly*, as Dan Marchant reveals. "Virgin had previously done a couple of provocative adverts saying, 'Come and see what's on display at stand xxx,' for the recent PCW show. Jane came up with the idea of doing our own version, 'Spot the two that aren't Virgin's,' to highlight our first two titles that wouldn't be distributed through Virgin Games."

The risqué advert featured some barely clothed members of The Sales Curve, including Jane Cavanagh and Dan Marchant. The week after the advert appeared, Jane received a call from major software distributor Leisuresoft, and a deal was soon in place. The transformation of The Sales Curve from a facilitator to a fully blown publishing and development company was complete.

As the company was transformed, so was Matt Spall's role, which became multi-

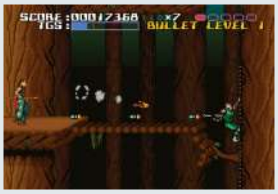


A TUFF DECISION

THE PLATFORMER THAT NEVER FORMED

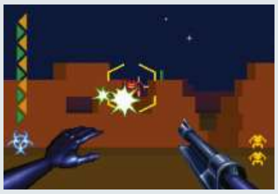
■ Darren Melbourne conceived an arcade platform game for The Sales Curve based around a central character called Mr Max E Tuff. The game became known as *Mr Tuff* and the lead character was a demolition droid. Chris Wild recalls the testers at SCi Southampton playing *Mr Tuff* on the SNES on the day he was interviewed in Southampton for his programmer's job. The game was due to be published by Ocean but by the time it was ready, that publisher had run into financial difficulties, and opted to pay SCi for the development, but not proceed with the cost of producing the cartridges and getting Nintendo to publish it.

With graphics and design by Ned Langman, John Croudy coded the game and it turned into a product that the small team were very proud of. Because the game was never published, SCi returned the rights to Darren and Ned, and they hope to finally launch *Mr Tuff* in the near future, approaching nearly 20 years later than originally planned, but better later than never.



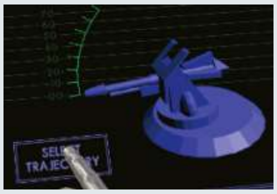
1993
TIME SLIP
SNES

■ An original Super Nintendo game seemingly inspired by coin-op titles like *Contra* and *Strider*. Worth investigating if you like action.



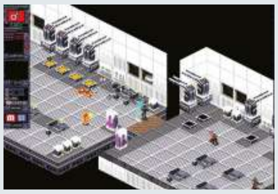
1993
THE LAWNMOWER MAN
SNES, Various

■ This was the company's first movie licence, from a surprise box office hit from 1992 starring Pierce Brosnan and Jeff Fahey.



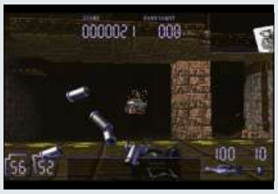
1994
CYBERWAR
IBM PC, Various

■ A game-only sequel to *The Lawnmower Man*, using extensive rendered FMV footage on CD-ROM.



1996
GENDER WARS
IBM PC, MAC, PlayStation

■ A *Syndicate*-inspired war of the sexes, which features the voices of Paul Darrow and Jacqueline Pearce.



1996
XS
IBM PC, 1996

■ SCi's entry into the 3D arcade multiplayer *Doom*/*Hexen*/*Quake* genre, with interesting but rather mixed results.

faceted, doing general admin, office management and logistics, eventually changing into a producer's job, testing, planning and making various design decisions on products in development.

Random Access continued to produce consistently impressive conversions of coin-ops including *Saint Dragon* for The Sales Curve's Storm label, but it was its first original title that really hit the mark. *SWIV* was a vertically scrolling arcade shooter influenced by several other games, including *Xenon 2*, designed by the Bitmap Brothers, a touch of Taito's *Flying Shark* and a hint of *Hybris*, by Discovery Software. "The guys who developed *Silkworm* and *The Ninja Warriors* and *Saint Dragon* wanted to do something original," remembers Dan. "As part of the pitch, I came up with a PR plan, where we would tell each magazine a different meaning for *SWIV*."

The acronyms they came up with included 'Special Weapons Interdiction Vehicles', 'Secret Weapons Installation Verification' and even 'Sold Without Interference from Virgin', which was an in-joke and didn't at all reflect the working relationship they had with that publisher. "Virgin did a great job for us, and our games sold well. So well in fact that Jane decided we should do the whole thing ourselves and keep more of the profits," says Dan. "We remained on good terms though." Of course, during all the press visits that followed, Dan hinted that *SWIV* was an unofficial sequel to *Silkworm* and was so much better than the original that they skipped over *II* and *III* and went straight to *IV*.

> I was given the machine, a desk, and a huge pile of documentation that was all written in Kanji!
>
> **Chris Wild**

After three busy years, Dan Marchant called time on his stint at The Sales Curve, moving on to become a project manager at Mirrorsoft. Later that same year, Matt Spall felt he also needed a fresh challenge and was on the verge of joining Dan when Mirror Group owner Robert Maxwell died in late 1991, putting the games publisher out of business and causing Matt a dilemma, as he had already resigned. "Jane was really nice about it though and let me stay on for a while longer," explains Matt. "She tried to persuade me not to go, but by then I'd made my decision." Matt joined Virgin Games a few months later, and following the collapse of Mirrorsoft, he was soon joined at Virgin by his former colleague Dan Marchant, reunited after all.

Back at The Sales Curve, the success of *Saint Dragon*, *Rod-Land* and *SWIV* had a massive effect, propelling the company to even

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

JANE CAVANAGH

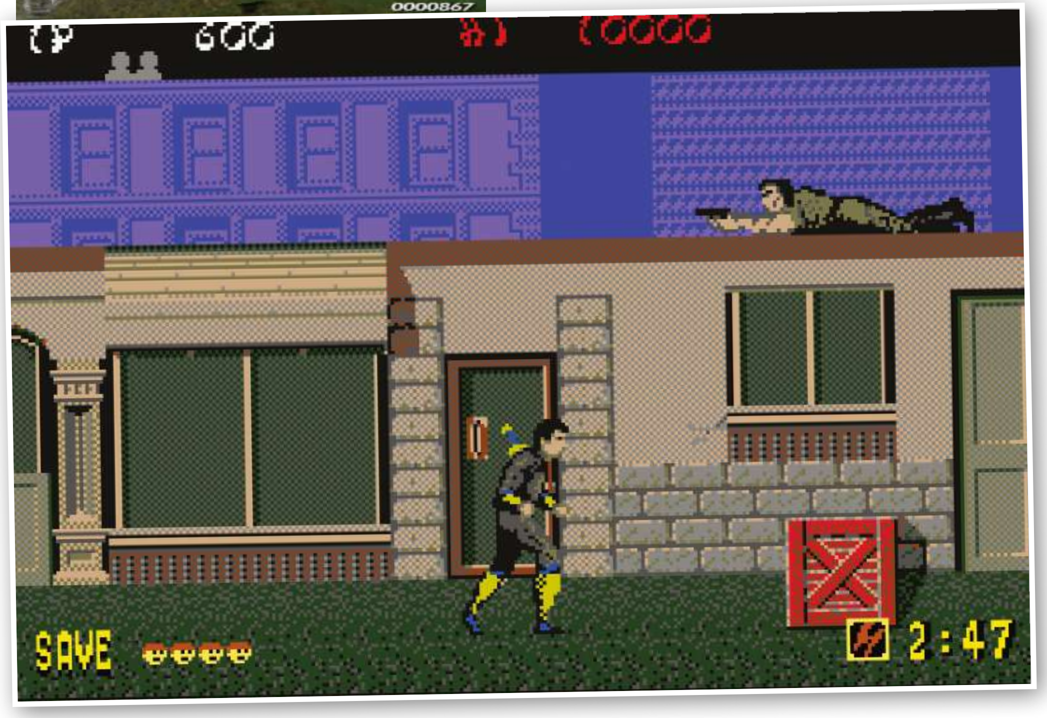
In 2000, Jane helped move SCi onto the main stock exchange, and in 2005 she led the successful acquisition of Eidos. In 2006 Jane negotiated the deal with Warner Bros to become a shareholder in SCi Entertainment Group. A year later she was awarded an OBE for services to the computer games industry. Jane left SCi in 2008.

MATT SPALL

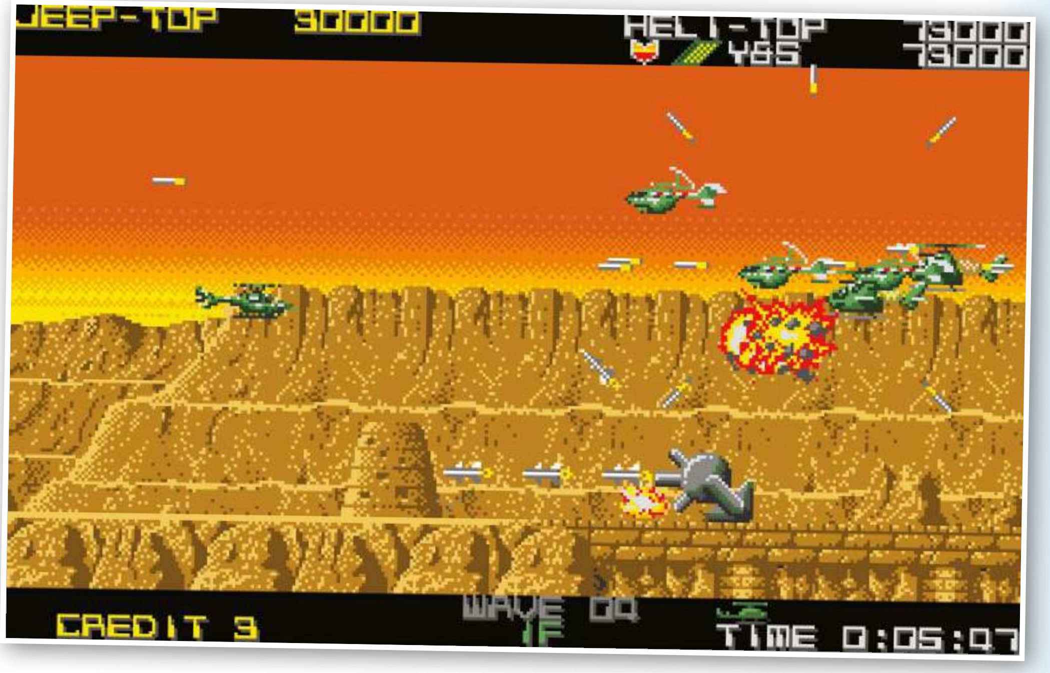
These days, Matt heads up Branching Narrative, a small team that designs and develops branching video products. It previously developed and released a '*Jackanory* meets *Bandersnatch*' interactive video adaptation of Ian Livingstone's *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook *Deathtrap Dungeon*, starring Eddie Marsan, and is now seeking investment for a new user-generated branching video app that it is looking to launch soon.

CHRIS WILD

After leaving SCi, Chris became co-owner and technical director of Smoking Gun Productions, developing amongst others, *Giant Killers*, the Sky *Football Manager* engine and the *Club Manager* series. In 2006 he set up Chilli Hugger Software working freelance for companies like IBM, PureGym, JustEat and Sky. In 2012 he released remakes of Spectrum classics *The Lords Of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge*.



» [Amiga] The 16-bit *Shinobi* versions were the worst of the conversions published by The Sales Curve.



» [Amiga] *Silkworm* on the Amiga was a sublime, smooth, addictive shooting spree par excellence.

greater success. Deals with Nintendo and Sega to produce titles on the new consoles were soon underway, and the death of the old 8-bit formats, the rise of the Japanese consoles and the emergence of the PC and CD-ROM era signalled the next step in The Sales Curve's evolution, rebranding to become Sales Curve Interactive (SCi) in 1993.

More coin-op conversions followed, including *Indy Heat* and *Big Run*, and to further reflect the rapid changes in the market, SCi formed a new development team in 1993, run by creative development manager Fergus McNeill and technical development manager John Chasey in Southampton, as Fergus explains.

"I was working for On-Line Entertainment on various small projects. It happened that SCi had acquired a movie licence and were speaking to various developers about doing an 'interactive movie'. This was very much the buzzword of the day, and I'd been involved in a few titles that were close enough to fit the bill, so I was loaned to head their project and recruit a team for them."

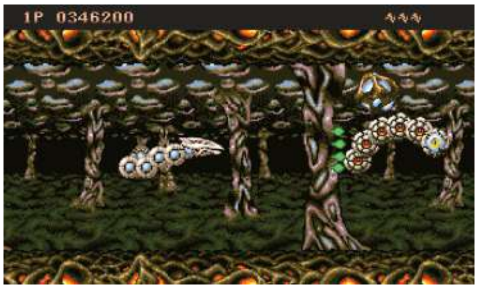
Fergus lived in Southampton and Jane Cavanagh had a house nearby in the New Forest, so it made sense for the new studio to be based there. They recruited a team of inexperienced but talented people and, with coding support from On-Line Entertainment's John Chasey, started on *The Lawnmower Man*. "After a while, it made sense to become full-time employees, so John and I made the switch permanent," adds Fergus.

Publishing that Stephen King-licensed title led to the development of a game sequel called *Cyberwar*, initially released for the IBM PC in 1994. It was during that year Chris Wild joined SCi in Southampton as a programmer, and his very first task was a daunting one. "I had to port *Cyberwar* to run on the Japanese NEC PC9821. The screen display was different, all the drivers were different, and I was given the machine, a desk and a huge pile of documentation that was all written in Kanji!"

SCi's Southampton operation had just spilled into a second building when Chris first joined, and the team continued to grow, consisting of developers mostly in their early to mid-20s, some straight out of university. The vibe was very much of a young, vibrant independent development studio. Chris' experience in reverse engineering code was vital to getting his inaugural job done, and from there he worked on several other SCi games for the PC including the Fergus McNeill tongue-in-cheek point-and-click adventure *Kingdom O'Magic* and *SWIV 3D*. Back in London, eight years in and a string of successful products behind her, Jane Cavanagh and SCi reached a crossroads. "Previously we had relied on bank overdrafts, but when Bill Ennis joined back in 1993, his banking background was invaluable in securing far more financial backing than we had been able to raise before," explains Jane. Expansion was on the cards, and when the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) for smaller growth businesses launched in 1996, SCi made a choice that would change the company for ever.

"Floating the company on AIM gave us the capital we needed," adds Jane, and that major decision transformed the company once again to become the SCi Entertainment Group, giving it the scope to acquire or build new businesses under the SCi brand. The Sales Curve was on a steep upward trajectory and the possibilities for the company felt limitless. *

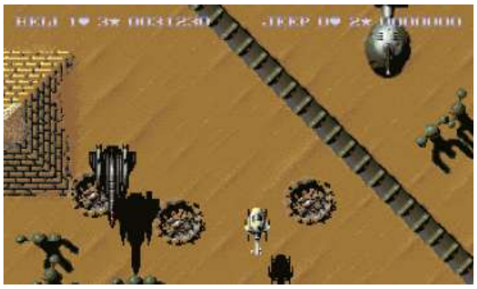
ESSENTIAL GAMES



SAINT DRAGON

AMIGA, VARIOUS – 1989

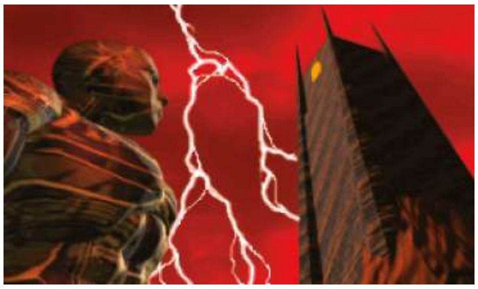
■ Most of The Sales Curve's coin-op conversions, especially those written in-house, were of an exceptionally high standard and *Saint Dragon* is a gloriously typical example. Smooth and seamless gameplay, with arcade-accurate graphics and sound on 16-bit platforms set its conversions way above the competition.



SWIV

AMIGA, VARIOUS – 1991

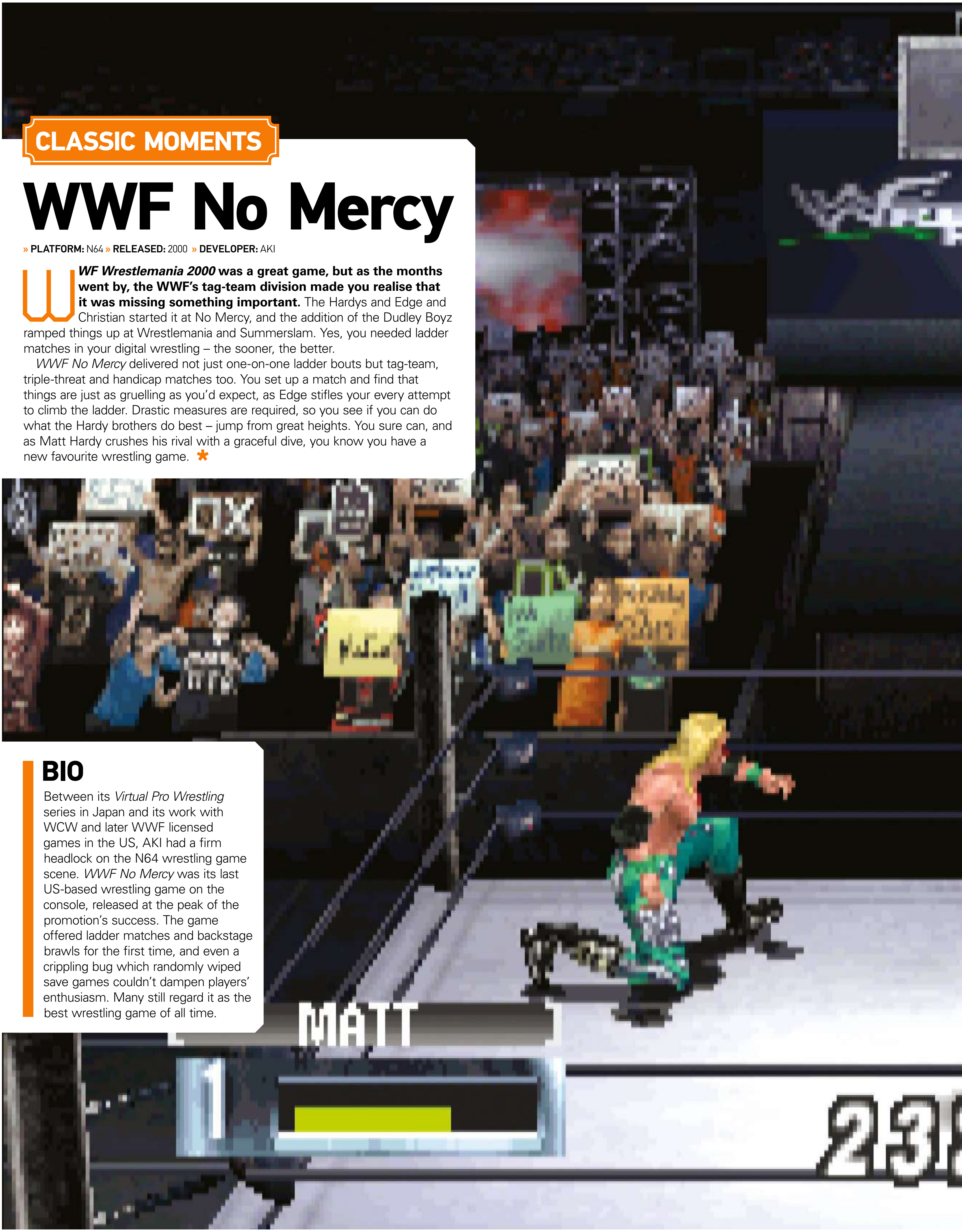
■ It didn't matter what *SWIV* actually meant, but it did matter how slick, addictive and incredibly playable this vertically scrolling arcade shooter was across all platforms, not just on the gorgeous 16-bit versions. *SWIV* rocked, and for a first original product it set the bar ridiculously high.



CYBERWAR

MS-DOS, MAC, PLAYSTATION – 1994

■ SCi's *Cyberwar* game included rendered in-game and FMV graphics that became a common feature for most SCi PC CD-ROM titles in the mid-Nineties. This approach ironically made some of the games less interactive than their previous non-CD-ROM titles, despite the company's new 'interactive' branding.



CLASSIC MOMENTS

WWF No Mercy

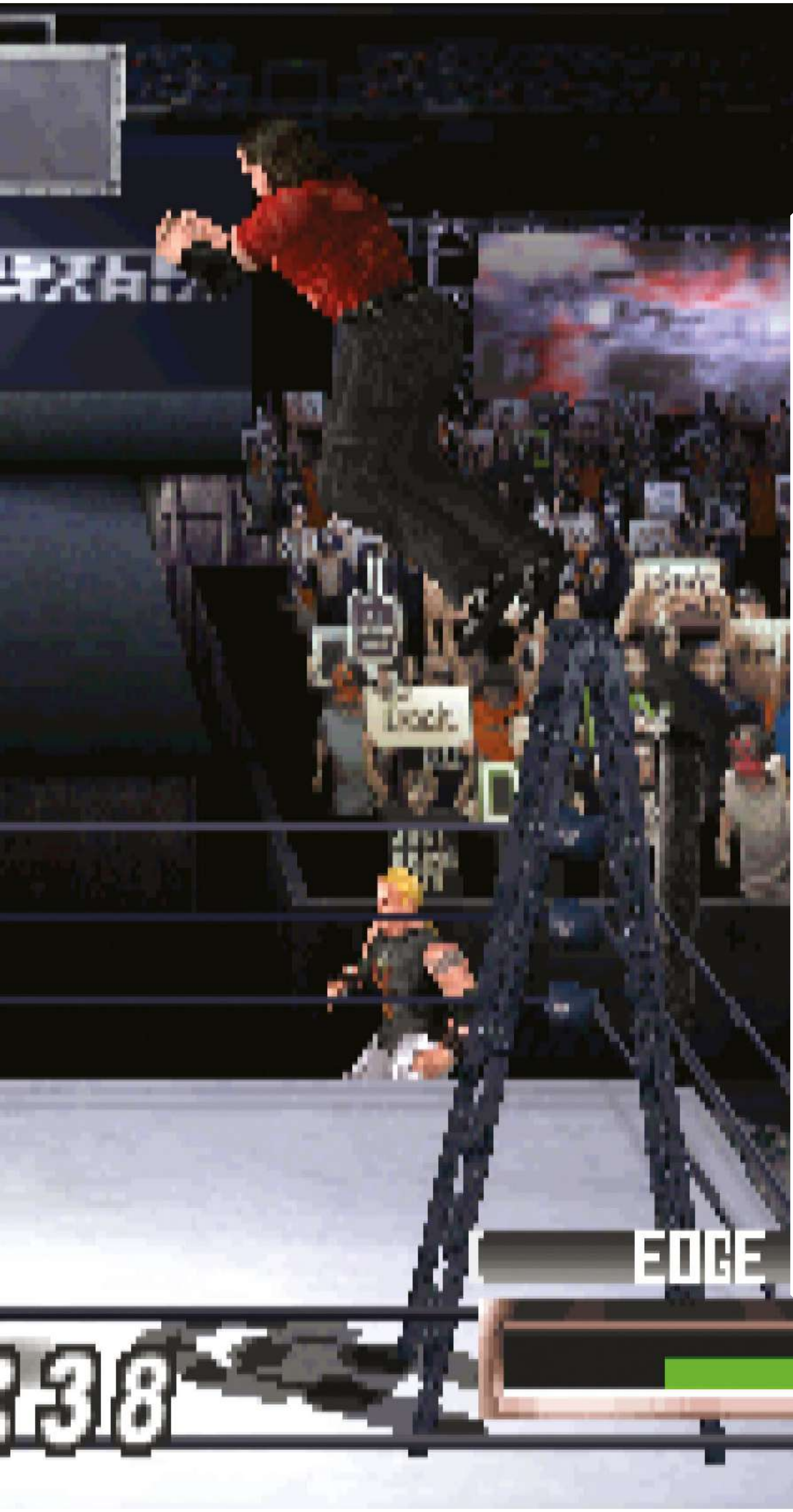
» **PLATFORM:** N64 » **RELEASED:** 2000 » **DEVELOPER:** AKI

***WWF Wrestlemania 2000* was a great game, but as the months went by, the WWF's tag-team division made you realise that it was missing something important.** The Hardys and Edge and Christian started it at No Mercy, and the addition of the Dudley Boyz ramped things up at Wrestlemania and Summerslam. Yes, you needed ladder matches in your digital wrestling – the sooner, the better.

WWF No Mercy delivered not just one-on-one ladder bouts but tag-team, triple-threat and handicap matches too. You set up a match and find that things are just as gruelling as you'd expect, as Edge stifles your every attempt to climb the ladder. Drastic measures are required, so you see if you can do what the Hardy brothers do best – jump from great heights. You sure can, and as Matt Hardy crushes his rival with a graceful dive, you know you have a new favourite wrestling game. *

BIO

Between its *Virtual Pro Wrestling* series in Japan and its work with WCW and later WWF licensed games in the US, AKI had a firm headlock on the N64 wrestling game scene. *WWF No Mercy* was its last US-based wrestling game on the console, released at the peak of the promotion's success. The game offered ladder matches and backstage brawls for the first time, and even a crippling bug which randomly wiped save games couldn't dampen players' enthusiasm. Many still regard it as the best wrestling game of all time.



MORE CLASSIC WWF NO MERCY MOMENTS

Stunning Camera

It would be a terrible shame if, when you're pulling off a finishing move on one of your closest friends, the camera were to dramatically pull in on the two wrestlers as the devastating impact occurs. Rubbing your victory in your friend's face like that would be awful – or rather, awfully funny.

Double Team Supreme

Tag-team moves like Total Elimination and the Meltzer Driver are the most spectacular finishing moves in wrestling. The Dudley Boyz made their first N64 appearance here and pulling off their iconic tandem techniques like the neck breaker backdrop, Doomsday Device and of course the 3D felt superbly satisfying.

Dick Kick City

A heel can cheat in many ways, from sneaking a weapon into the ring to getting their mates to interfere in the match, but the most despicable of all is surely the low blow. There's a bit of comedy to this ultimate act of evil in *No Mercy* though, as an amusing little 'ding' sound plays when boot meets balls.

Russo Mode

SMACK
THE ROCK

Not only could you create your own wrestlers, you could edit all of the existing crew in any wacky way you wanted. Stone Cold Steve Austin decides to grow his hair out? Book it. The Rock joins D-Generation X after patching things up with Triple H? It doesn't need to make sense, it's a swerve, bro!

THE MAKING OF

Dungeons & Dragons

WARRIORS OF THE ETERNAL SUN™

THE GOBLIN HORDES ARE AT THE WALLS OF THE DUKE'S CASTLE, BAYING FOR BLOOD. SUDDENLY, THE SKY ERUPTS, AND THE HUMAN AND GOBLIN ARMIES ARE SUCKED INTO THE VOID. SO BEGINS THIS EPIC AND EXCLUSIVE MEGA DRIVE RPG. FOR THE DUKE!

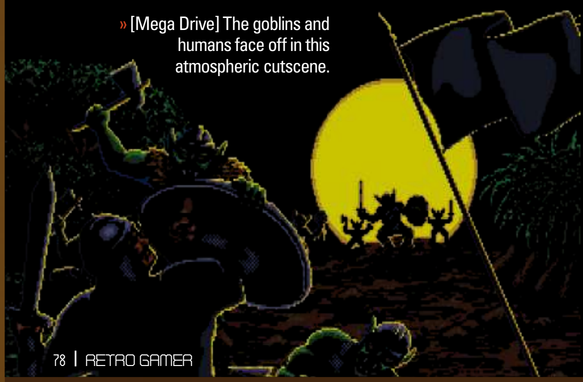
WORDS BY GRAEME MASON

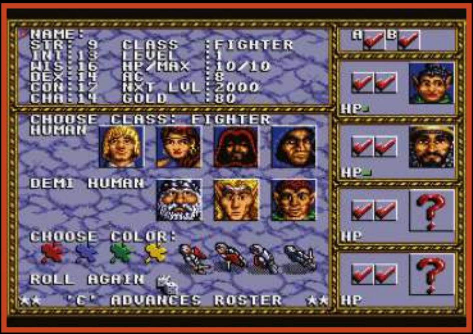
Buyouts in the games industry are a hot topic today, with acquisitions such as Microsoft's eye-watering deal to subsume Activision Blizzard into the Bill Gates empire dominating the news. It's not a new phenomenon, though; 30 years ago, publisher Virgin saw enough in the Westwood Associates development studio to table a bid and invest heavily in the company. "We sold Westwood to Virgin in June of 1992," says Louis Castle, cofounder of Westwood along with Brett Sperry, and *Warriors Of The Eternal Sun*'s chief designer. "The extra investment and the amazing Virgin marketing team helped [us] produce a series of notable games throughout the Nineties." Sci-fi point-and-click adventure *Blade Runner*, the hugely popular *Command & Conquer* series and RPGs such as *Lands Of Lore* firmly established the studio on the map.

Westwood Associates began life in 1985. "We started Westwood in my parent's garage," grins Louis. "After shipping our first game later that year, we moved to a small office in Las Vegas and started to grow." Having already published a brace of RPGs under the Infocom banner by the late-Eighties, Louis and Brett had forged a relationship with SSI, owners of the licence to create *Dungeons & Dragons*-based videogames. *Hillsfar* and *DragonStrike* came first before Westwood and SSI hit gold with *Eye Of The Beholder*. Next, it was time to take *D&D* to the Mega Drive. "Ed Annunziata at Sega was talking to SSI about making a Genesis RPG based on its licence," says Louis. "Westwood's history with the *Eye Of The Beholder* series made us a natural fit given our deep knowledge of *D&D* and our success in translating the ruleset into a real-time computer-based RPG."

> **"ED ANNUNZIATA AT SEGA WAS TALKING TO SSI ABOUT MAKING A GENESIS RPG BASED ON ITS LICENCE"**
> **LOUIS CASTLE**

Having run his first tabletop campaign in 1978, Louis' experience with the game was extensive. The latest campaign, set within the *D&D* canon, concerned the planet of Mystara, also known as The Hollow World, where life prospered inside rather than outside its outer crust. As Louis explains, the name also formed the Mega Drive game's working title. "We used the same name to telegraph to *D&D* fans that this game was set in a new world with slightly different rules than the *AD&D* set." With Louis' experience in *Dungeons & Dragons* established with his ten years plus campaign, he began formulating a new story. "We didn't specifically follow any of the prepared modules, but we did borrow liberally from them for characters, settings and subplots."


» [Mega Drive] The goblins and humans face off in this atmospheric cutscene.

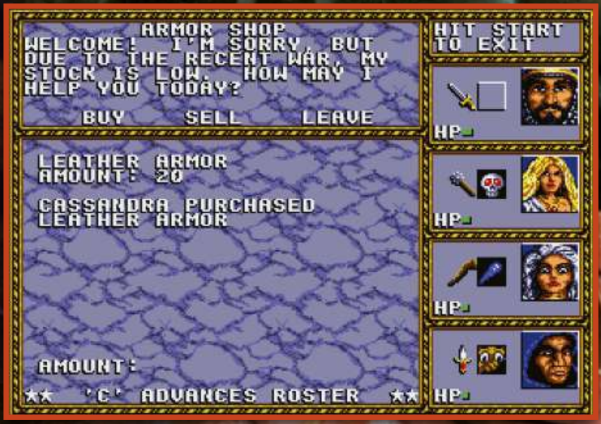


» [Mega Drive] Character creation is, as ever, a key part of this RPG.

Warriors Of The Eternal Sun's plot is told in true early Nineties-style via still pictures and text. Months of fighting have seen hundreds of men and goblins fall in a bitter and bloody war. But the end is near; humanity is weak and has retreated to the last stronghold, Duke Barrik's castle. The goblins swarm up the walls as the final, decisive battle begins. Then, suddenly, a brilliant flare of light blinds all, goblins and humans alike. Thunder drowns out the pained screams as the castle is uprooted and transported to a strange, red-hued world where the horizon arcs *upward* on all sides, culminating in a fiery red orb that illuminates this bizarre world in a mysterious crimson light. Welcome, friend, to The Hollow World. With the dangerous natives instantly attacking this new sight in their land, the duke assembles a team to explore the outside area. If humankind is to survive this perilous world, they must find allies.

Warriors Of The Eternal Sun employs a similar gameplay method to its main inspiration, *Eye Of The Beholder*. "We used a very proven combat model for the dungeons," explains Louis. "But

» [Mega Drive] Protecting your party with armour is an essential first step.


ARMOR SHOP
WELCOME! I'M SORRY, BUT DUE TO THE RECENT WAR, MY STOCK IS LOW. HOW MAY I HELP YOU TODAY?

BUY SELL LEAVE

LEATHER ARMOR
AMOUNT: 20

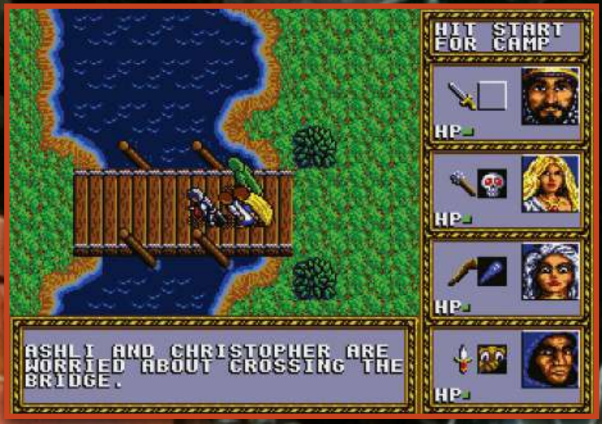
CASSANDRA PURCHASED LEATHER ARMOR

AMOUNT:

** 'C' ADVANCES ROSTER **

HIT START TO EXIT
HP
HP
HP
HP

» [Mega Drive] Ashli and Christopher are quite right to be concerned.


ASHLI AND CHRISTOPHER ARE WORRIED ABOUT CROSSING THE BRIDGE.

HIT START FOR CAMP
HP
HP
HP
HP

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BATTLETECH: THE CRESCENT HAWK'S INCEPTION
SYSTEM: DOS, VARIOUS
YEAR: 1988

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, DOS, MEGA-CD, SNES
YEAR: 1990

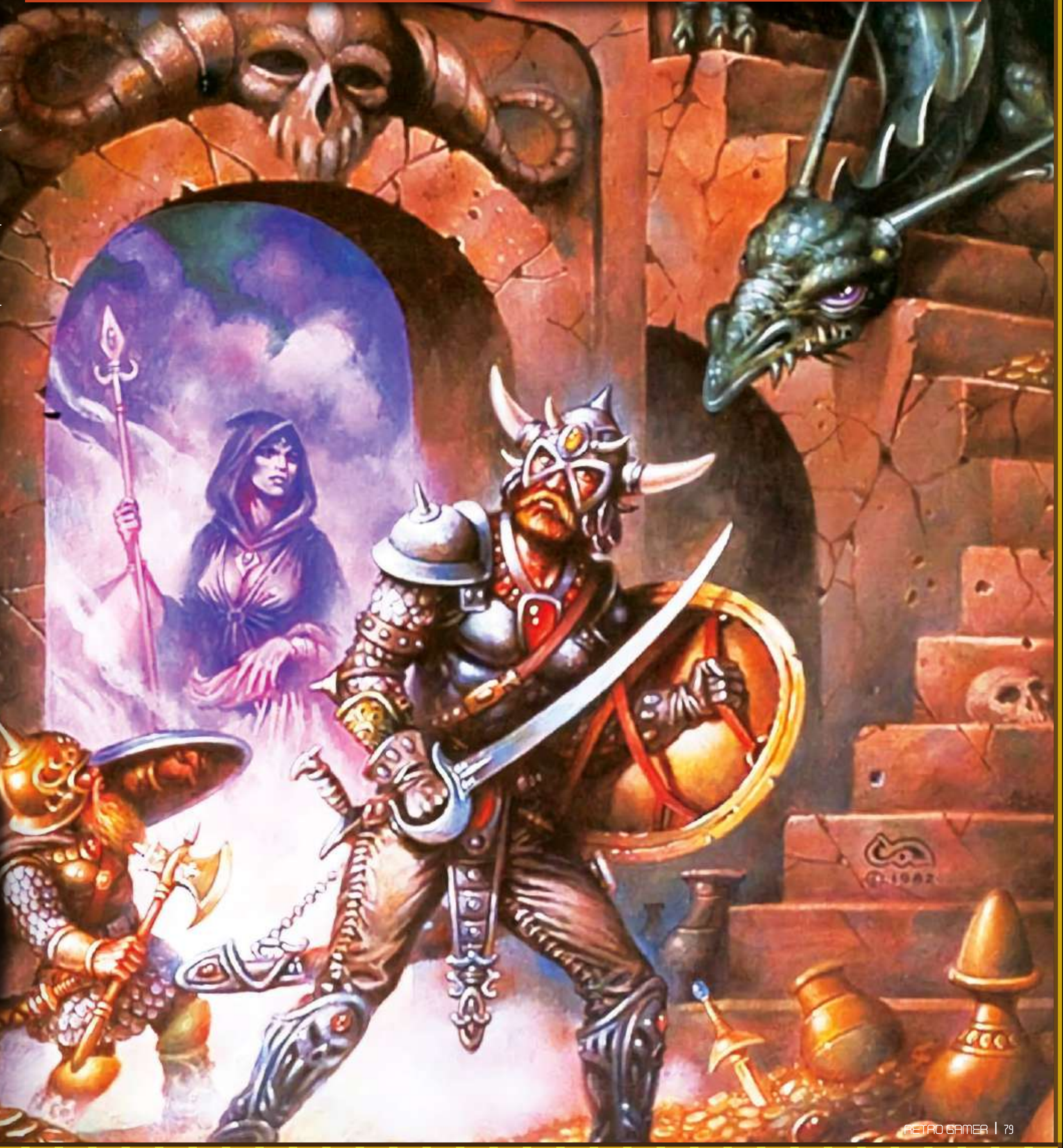
DRAGONSTRIKE
SYSTEM: AMIGA, C64, DOS, NES
YEAR: 1990

MEGA DRIVE
Dungeons & Dragons
Warriors of the Eternal Sun
16-BIT CARTRIDGE
SEGA

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** WESTWOOD ASSOCIATES
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **PLATFORM:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **GENRE:** ROLE-PLAYING GAME

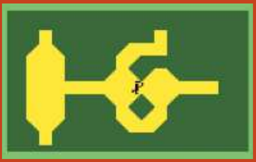
» Louis Castle was a cofounder of Westwood Studios and a huge *Dungeons & Dragons* fan.



CRITICAL HITS

MORE ESSENTIAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ROMPS

CLOUDY MOUNTAIN



■ The first official *D&D* game debuted on the Mattel Intellivision in 1982. It's a remarkably complex game for the system as the player explores a series of randomly generated mazes, gathering treasure and defeating monsters. Its sequel, *Treasure Of Tarmin*, followed a year later.

HEROES OF THE LANCE

■ While based upon the popular *Dragonlance* books, this SSI/US Gold game lacks the RPG elements of most other *D&D* games employing a side-on fighting style. Nevertheless, it was massively successful and ported to a bewildering number of systems.

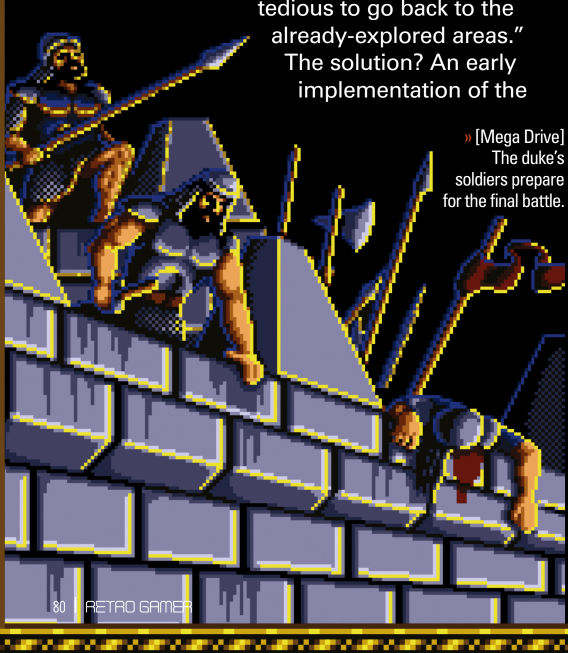
CHAMPIONS OF KRYNN

■ Once more based within the *Dragonlance* world, *Champions Of Krynn* was the first of a trilogy and boasts many of the features that had already become commonplace: first-person dungeon view coupled with turn-based play when outside. Unique Krynn character races give it greater variety.

the outside world was a bit more difficult because we wanted a massive open world – with a party of characters following behind the leader, often resulting in less than ideal unit placement when ambushed." Consequently, Louis' team experimented with a timed turn-based style for the external environments, similar to the dungeon combat. However, player frustration, increased by the distinctly laborious need to reposition characters on the fly, led to the final format of third-person turn-based combat for outside, first-person real time inside the game's many dungeons and caves.

One of *Warriors Of The Eternal Sun*'s most notable achievements is its map, a sprawling open world, and a rarity on the Sega Mega Drive. "The 'very big world' idea was great for making the outside world feel open and significant," notes Louis. "And it also allowed us to separate the caves from the castle by distance, which felt more natural." The vast playing area also serves as an ample playground for players to level up their characters, an essential grinding element of the game should you wish to avoid a premature demise for your party. "However," says Louis, "it made it tedious to go back to the already-explored areas." The solution? An early implementation of the fast-travel mechanic we know and love so much today. "The caravan system lets you return to a cave or dungeon instantly – you missed the extra encounters you would have along the way but saved hours of walking!"

"WE PROTOTYPED MANY INTERFACES TO GET TO THE ONES WE LIKED" LOUIS CASTLE

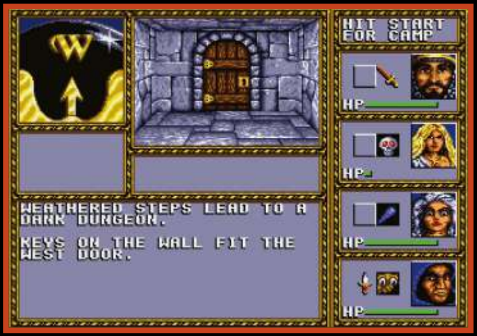


» [Mega Drive] The duke's soldiers prepare for the final battle.

Despite Louis infusing *Warriors* with his extensive *D&D* knowledge, not everybody involved had quite the same background. "[Programmers] Chris Yates and Marco Herrera were not *D&D* or RPG players," recalls Louis. "So they struggled with how to implement the many rules. The nuances of The Hollow World rules were also a bit tricky." As with most tabletop games of the era, there was no consideration of how the rules might be implemented into software. "Dungeon Masters were, and still are, expected to use the rules as a guide for decisions which made codifying the rules in software quite difficult."

Other key team members included Westwood's musical regular Frank Klepacki, who, along with Dwight Okahara (sound effects), was overseen by audio director Paul Mudra. Meanwhile, Ethan Grimes designed *Warriors*' intuitive user interface. "We prototyped many interfaces to get to the ones we liked," recalls Louis. "Poor Ethan had to keep re-writing that bit of code!" As development reached its conclusion, Louis and his team pushed the Mega Drive's cartridge limits. *Warriors*' expansive world took up much space, despite accusations that the game itself was shorter than, say, similar games on the SNES. "Making the game longer would have required even more re-use of assets," notes Louis. "So I don't think it would have added much value." With many of *Warriors*' scenes appearing analogous, it's clear this was a wise decision. "We had a large amount of creative control, so I don't think I was forced to make a decision I didn't believe in. Although I'm sure at the time I could have listed a hundred things to add!"

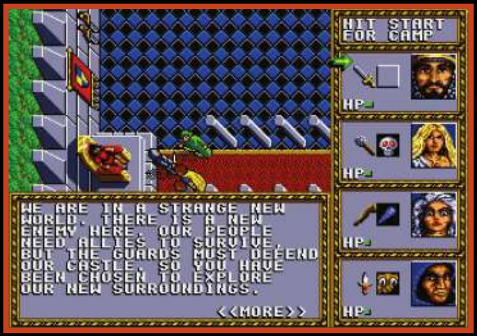
Upon release, the most significant criticism levelled against Westwood's game was its high difficulty level. There's no tutorial in *Warriors Of The Eternal Sun*; the player gathers all the equipment they can within their meagre budget before heading out to the wild lands surrounding the castle. Much to the chagrin of some reviewers and gamers, it's necessary to grind the more sedate areas of the game before you proceed too far. Otherwise, it'll be a quick death for the foolhardy team. "I'm always reminded of how hard games were back in the Nineties," laughs Louis. "I think the audience was a bit more hardcore then, so games were just expected to take a long time and be pretty hard. I don't think the difficulty of *Warriors* had any negative effect; I'm quite certain if it had been too easy, we'd have been panned in the reviews." The only previous *Dungeons & Dragons*



WEATHERED STEPS LEAD TO A DANK DUNGEON.

KEYS ON THE WALL FIT THE WEST DOOR.

» [Mega Drive] Underneath the castle's spires are a set of dank dungeons.



WE ARE IN A STRANGE NEW WORLD. THERE IS A NEW ENEMY HERE. OUR PEOPLE NEED ALLIES TO SURVIVE. BUT THE GUARDS MUST DEFEND OUR CASTLE. SO YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO EXPLORE OUR NEW SURROUNDINGS.

<<MORE>>

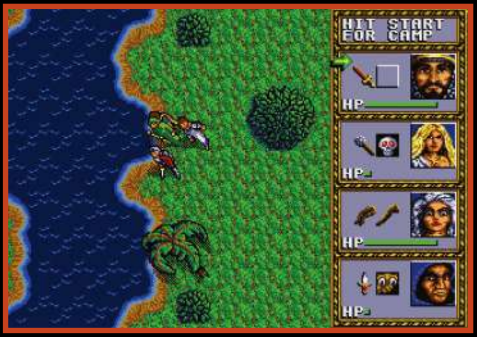
» [Mega Drive] The party's first task is approaching the duke and receiving their orders.

BALDUR'S GATE

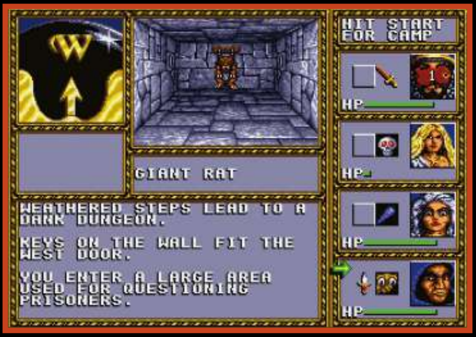
■ Computer RPGs exploded in popularity in 1998 with this sprawling epic from BioWare and publisher Interplay. Using the bespoke Infinity Engine, this evocative tale is set within The Forgotten Realms, its streamlined gameplay opening it up to a whole range of new fans.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

■ The second game of this title, this update from BioWare concerns a mysterious plague afflicting the Sword Coast town, Neverwinter. With hugely improved visuals, an excellent online mode and plenty of depth, it remains a favourite, despite some technical issues.



» [Mega Drive] Don't be fooled by The Hollow World's verdant landscape – this is an area steeped in danger.



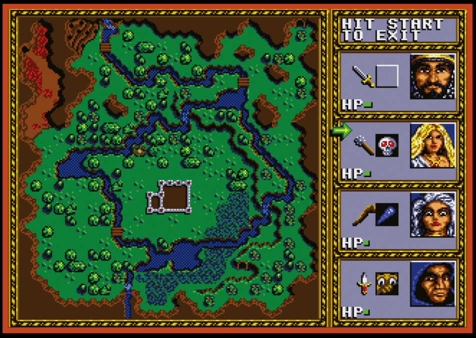
WEATHERED STEPS LEAD TO A DANK DUNGEON.
KEYS ON THE WALL FIT THE WEST DOOR.
YOU ENTER A LARGE AREA USED FOR QUESTIONING PRISONERS.

» [Mega Drive] Indoor combat is much quicker; you'll need to grow accustomed to it quickly or pay a hefty price.

game for Sega console owners had been the underwhelming *Heroes Of The Lance* on the Master System. Despite unfavourable comparisons to genre legends such as *Phantasy Star 2*, *Warriors*' pre-generated map and variety endeared it to most critics. "A good attempt at bringing *D&D* to the Mega Drive, and it works too," noted *Sega Power* in December 1992. "It lacks the edge of the *Phantasy Star* series, but it's still good fun – and a *big* challenge."

Despite moderate success, there was no sequel to *Warriors Of The Eternal Sun* or further adventures of any kind set within The Hollow World. Explains Louis, "I'm sure we talked about sequels, but Sega was moving on to its Game Gear and Sega CD, so first-party games were not focussed on the Genesis. Also, Westwood was becoming very busy with other games, so I think we just mutually had other priorities. But I'm pretty sure the game paid for itself and generated profits since only a few of Westwood's games ever lost money."

Later the same year, Westwood Associates dipped into the TurboGrafx-16 with *Dungeons & Dragons: Order Of The Griffon*. Its reputation with games such as *Eye Of The Beholder* was cemented further with console output such as *Warriors Of The Eternal Sun*, tempting Virgin into acquiring the studio the same year. The deal meant that all of the developer's work would subsequently be published by Richard Branson's empire.



» [Mega Drive] Fortunately, there's a handy map to help you find your way around *Warriors*' large world

Nevertheless, development on *Warriors* proved to be an experience that would prove most beneficial. "It was great to work on a first-party game with Sega," says Louis. "Ed Annunziata and Sega helped us to up our game – every time we worked on a licensed property with an external production team, it helped us understand how important IP development is."

Warriors Of The Eternal Sun would have even more strategic importance to the success of Westwood post-takeover. "For me, I liked working on the map generation and compression schemes," reveals Louis. "And those compression evolutions eventually led to the ability to have full-screen audio and video for *Command & Conquer* – and that certainly paid dividends for Westwood." *

Our thanks to Louis for his time.

CLASS WAR

WELCOME TO RETRO GAMER'S QUICK GUIDE TO WHO YOU SHOULD INVITE TO YOUR PARTY. PLEASE LEAVE YOUR SWORD BY THE DOOR

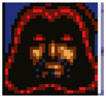
FIGHTER

■ The first and last line in any battle, the fighter is the strong and well-armed defender and attacker of any party. Able to wear any armour and wield all weapons, the fighter has more hit points than any other class. Guess all that personal training paid off.

CLERIC

■ Clerics are a combination of fighter and magic user and hold a vital role in any party. Able to turn dead and heal wounds, they're also proficient with all armour, although they cannot wield edged weapons. They receive more hit points than thieves and magic users.

MAGIC USER



■ While their weapon use is limited to daggers, staves and slings, magic users more than make up for this with their range of spells. All magic users begin with the magic missile spell, helpful in taking out opponents while safe behind the party's fighters.

THIEF

■ Able to use any weapon, thieves can only wear leather armour due to its stealthy properties. The key attribute for any thief is dexterity; they use this to hide in the shadows, disarm traps and backstab enemies. Advanced thieves can even use rudimentary magic.

DWARF

■ While their short stature makes using spears tricky (read, impossible), dwarves have a good relationship with every other weapon, including ranged. They are stocky yet robust and reliable in a scrap, making an excellent foil for fighters. And remember, nobody tosses a dwarf.

ELF

■ The elf is the opposite of the dwarf, tall, slender and defined with sharp features. Elves combine the fighter's abilities with those of a magic user and can wield any weapon. They can also use wands and possess an innate ability to detect hidden entrances.

HALFLING

■ Small and hirsute, don't let the halfling's diminutive stature fool you – these are adept and useful fighters. As with dwarves, they cannot use spears, but otherwise, the halfling is another valuable character and also able to hide in the shadows while outside.

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come

OLD!
retro GAMER
ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBORS
MARVEL
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY
THE MAKING OF NARC
MASTER SYSTEM GEMS TO COLLECT
ASTRO CITY MINI HANDS-ON

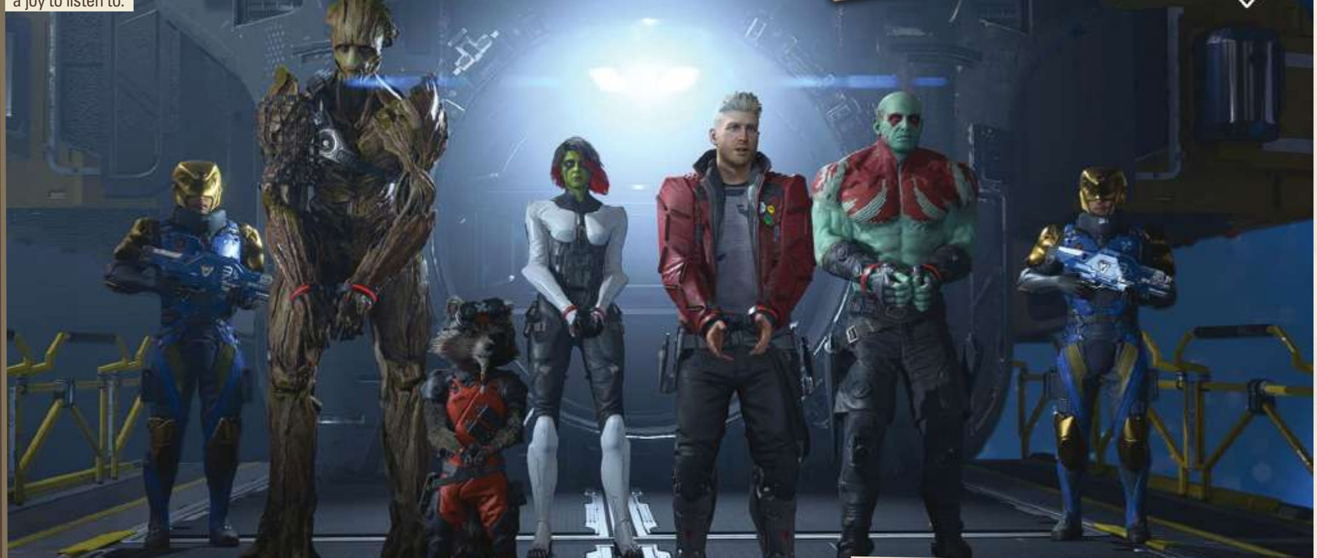
Info

- **» System:** Xbox Series X/S, Xbox One, PS4, PS5, Switch, PC
- **» Year:** 2021
- **» Publisher:** Square Enix Europe
- **» Developer:** Eidos-Montréal
- **» Key People:** Jean François Dugas, Daniel Letendre, Bruno Gauthier-Leblanc

Go Deeper

» *Guardians* was one of two superhero projects Square Enix Europe worked on with Disney, the other being the multiplayer-focussed *Marvel's Avengers*.

» *Guardians* features Eidos-Montréal's Dawn Engine, which was also used to power *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* and was hugely challenging to create.



» [Xbox Series X] *Guardians'* voice cast is excellent and their constant patter is a joy to listen to.

It's rare that licensed videogames appear in any capacity nowadays and rarer still when they're built with AAA budgets. While Guardians didn't break the bank for Square Enix Europe, it's still a game that you need to play

Words by Darran Jones

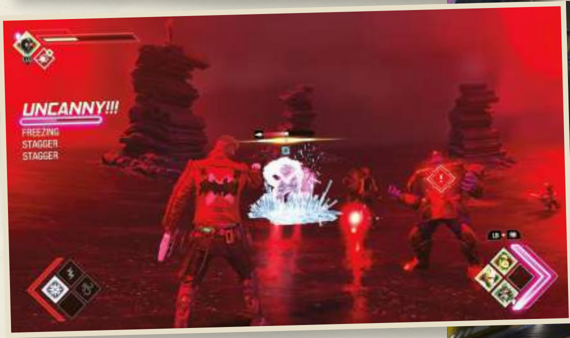
MARVEL'S GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

THE BACKGROUND

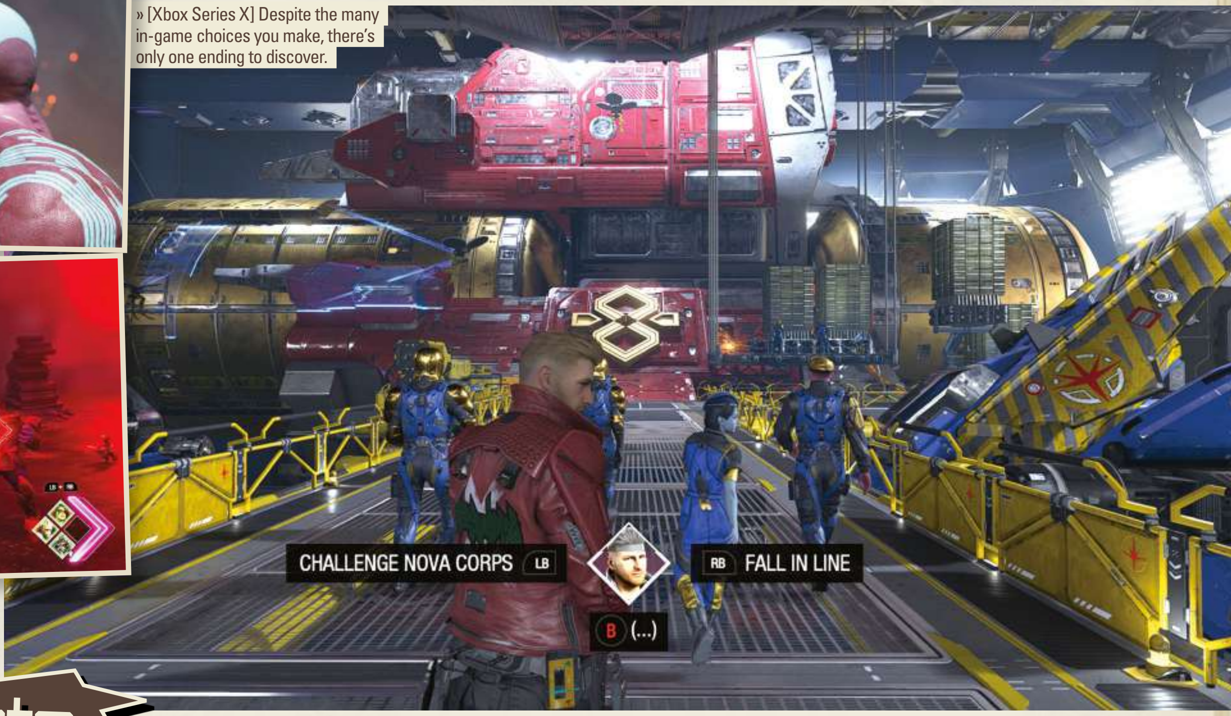
Eidos-Montréal seemed like the perfect fit for an adventure based around Marvel's lovable rogues when Eurogamer and Kotaku first revealed the news of a new *Guardians Of The Galaxy* game in January 2017. The Canadian developer was no stranger to imaginative, futuristic worlds, having been behind the acclaimed *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* in 2011 and its sequel *Mankind Divided* in 2016. Of course, the Guardians were already familiar with many gamers thanks to the success of James Gunn's blockbuster movies, the long-running comic-book series and Telltale Games' own episodic adventure game which would debut a few months later in April 2017. There was clearly a thirst for the kooky quintet and superhero games in general, and publisher Square Enix Europe hoped to capitalise on that with Eidos-Montréal's game and an *Avengers* game developed by Crystal Dynamics.

The publisher used *Guardians* to kick off its 2021 E3 presentation, and while the game was quickly praised for its narration, distinctive look (it's one pretty-looking game) and Eighties-fuelled soundtrack, it drew criticism for its lacklustre-looking combat and the ability to only play as Star-Lord. Some fans of the film were also upset by the new voice cast and look of Star-Lord, while others were confused by the lack of multiplayer components in a game based around five characters who worked together to save the universe. But then the game came out and all those concerns were largely forgotten.

» [Xbox Series X] *Guardians* features some great boss fights and you'll need all your skills to take them down.



» [Xbox Series X] *Guardians*' combat does a good job of highlighting the group's teamwork.



» [Xbox Series X] Despite the many in-game choices you make, there's only one ending to discover.

Things of note

SUITS YOU, SIR

There's a variety of unlockable costumes you can obtain during play which are based on designs from past comics and even James Gunn's original 2014 film.

UPGRADE PATH

Rocket certainly knows his way around a workbench and he'll craft all manner of useful upgrades for you… providing you have the resources.

MUSICAL MILANO

WHAM!
MAKE IT BIG

You can listen to a number of Eighties tracks while onboard the Milano. There are 31 in total, including Soft Cell's *Tainted Love* and Blondie's *Call Me*.

STAR-LORD'S STORY

Everything that happens in the game is summed up in Star-Lord's scrapbook. It's a great narration device, framing the story well.

GROOT UPGRADES

Good performances in combat earn experience points which can be used to upgrade the Guardians. Sadly, they're a little too easy to achieve.

THE GAME

As you'd expect for a game based around the Guardians Of The Galaxy, a large chunk of the 16 chapters you'll experience is focussed on combat. While it's true that you only ever play as Star-Lord, you still get to control the rest of the Guardians during these battle sequences and while some have found the combat to be one of the least-inspired parts of the game we actually really enjoyed it. Holding down RB allows you to access any available members of your team, with each of them being assigned to one of your controller's face buttons. Once selected you'll then be given access to their unique abilities, and as you'd expect, each team member serves a specific role with Drax relying on brute force, while Rocket can use ranged attacks that affect multiple enemies.

Abilities can also be chained together, which makes for some satisfying payoffs when you see them come to fruition. One of the highlights of combat is the 'Team Huddle' which can be activated once its meter is filled. Once activated Star-Lord summons everyone together for a motivational speech. Deliver something suitably rousing based on their comments and you'll boost your team's spirit and also their fighting abilities for a brief period. Even if you mess it up, Star-Lord will still receive a temporary boost and you'll also get to enjoy some rousing Eighties music. There's nothing quite like downing a gigantic enemy while listening to a-ha's *Take On Me* or Europe's *The Final Countdown*.

Star-Lord himself largely relies on his iconic guns, but even these offer options as you can select different elemental types as the game progresses, which further opens up the strategies available to you in battle. Star-Lord's weapons and the other Guardians' skills are also useful during the exploration parts of the game and you'll often need to use both in order to solve environmental puzzles (particularly if you want to seek out all the alternate costumes hidden throughout each stage). Few of these puzzles will test you in any real way but they do a great job of strengthening the bond you feel with Gamora, Groot, Rocket and Drax and as the adventure progresses and their personalities shine through you'll start to treasure every moment you share with them.

One of the strengths of James Gunn's films was getting across the fact that the Guardians are a family and while they're certainly dysfunctional they always come through for each other when needed. Star-Lord was often critical in keeping the peace and the Star-Lord here plays the same pivotal role. As the rest of the team bicker, struggle with their emotions or simply look to Star-Lord for advice, you'll be given dialogue options that you have a limited amount of time to respond to. Do you side with Gamora during an argument or agree that Drax should throw Rocket across a chasm? While your decisions won't impact the game's ending, they do shape your relationship with the rest of the team.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

Aside from its interesting combat system, *Guardians Of The Galaxy* doesn't really break new gaming ground. What it does though it does really well, fusing cutting-edge visuals to a well-written, genuinely funny story that's supported by a highly engaging cast of truly likeable characters. Games based on licences are nowhere near as popular as they were in the Nineties and Noughties and *Guardians*' inability to create a suitable financial return in line with Square's expectations (the studio has since been sold along with the rest of Square's Western developers) means a sequel is now highly unlikely. A pity, as it's some of the most fun we've had with a AAA game for some time. *

Wii

» **MANUFACTURER:** Nintendo » **YEAR:** 2006
» **COST:** £179.99 (launch), £25+ (today, boxed), £20+ (today, unboxed)

Nintendo had once dominated the home-console world, but after three successive generations of declining sales, the company found itself in third place behind Sony and Microsoft. Understanding that producing another conventional machine was futile, Nintendo pivoted towards a design which emphasised affordable, accessible gaming, leaving the pursuit of power and multimedia dominance to its wealthier rivals. The result was the Wii, a comparatively diminutive console which didn't offer high-definition output or DVD playback, but did include an innovative motion-sensing controller that resembled a TV remote control.

The glossy white body of the console was clearly inspired by the design of contemporary Apple products, and while the name initially drew some criticism, the public quickly embraced the Wii. The pack-in game *Wii Sports* was a brilliant means of getting families to understand the console, paving the way for games like *Wii Fit* and *Just Dance 3* to become hits alongside more traditional fare such as *Super Mario Galaxy*. The Wii became Nintendo's most successful home console to date in 2009, but sales momentum slowed afterwards as rival platforms embraced motion controls. *

POWER
RESET

Wii fact

■ The original RVL-001 model of the Wii supports GameCube games and peripherals. The revised RVL-101, introduced in 2011 and sometimes known as the Family Edition, does not.

PROCESSOR: 32-BIT IBM BROADWAY POWERPC CPU (729 MHZ)
GRAPHICS: ATI HOLLYWOOD CUSTOM GPU (243 MHZ, 3 MB EMBEDDED DRAM, 24 MB 1T-SRAM)
STORAGE: 512 MB INTERNAL FLASH STORAGE, SD CARD (UP TO 32GB, OPTIONAL), GAMECUBE MEMORY CARD (OPTIONAL, RVL-001 ONLY)
MEDIA: WII OPTICAL DISC (4.7/8.5 GB), GAMECUBE OPTICAL DISC (1.46 GB, RVL-001 ONLY)
NETWORK: 802.11B/G WIRELESS, ETHERNET (OPTIONAL)
SYSTEM SOFTWARE: WII SYSTEM SOFTWARE
AUDIO: 5.1 CHANNEL DOLBY PRO LOGIC II
RAM: 64 MB 1T-SRAM

EJECT
Wii
HOME
POWER
CE 0125
ACN 060 566 083
FCC ID: POO-WC45
IC:4250A-WC45
RVL-003
MADE IN CHINA

ESSENTIAL GAME

Super Mario Galaxy 2

The original *Super Mario Galaxy* was a landmark release for the Wii, but these days you can get it for the Switch as part of *Super Mario 3D All-Stars*. Its superb sequel remains exclusive to the Wii though, and it remains one of the finest games ever made. Hopping between planetoids of platforming challenges is still great fun, and only improved by the addition of new power-ups, the return of Yoshi and a higher level of challenge throughout the game. It's essential for anyone with an interest in the genre.

POWER
RESET
32
EJECT

In the chair with...

ANDREW SLEIGH

The name may not be familiar but you'll know his games. Graphics artist Andrew Sleigh worked at Ocean from 1986 to 1990 and was part of the in-house team that helped turn it into one of Europe's biggest software houses

Words by Martyn Carroll

These days Andrew is a self-employed web developer, a job he's done for the past 20 years. But when **Retro Gamer** calls it's not to enquire about a new website or a forum upgrade. We want to know about his four years at Ocean where he worked on some of the firm's biggest licences including *Platoon*, *Gryzor* and *Batman*. We meet him on a cold April afternoon in Buxton, in a quiet corner of his local pub The Cheshire Cheese, next to a roaring log fire. Titanic ales are flowing, and so too are tales of Andrew's time in the Ocean dungeon.

» Andrew, left, enjoys a bromantic moment with programmer James Higgins. Note his strapped-up hand due to a joystick-induced RSI.

Can we begin with this folder you've brought with you?
It's something that I made at the end, when I left Ocean. It's a portfolio of original magazine cuttings.

So reviews of all the games you worked on. And what's this? Looks like you made the local news?
That's a clipping from the local paper, the *Buxton Advertiser.* I think it must have been my mum who got in touch with them, "Look, my son's done this!" It was from when I was working on *Batman*. The photo pretty much shows my setup at Ocean. A Commodore 64, monitor, disk drive, joystick.

That looks like a Powerplay Cruiser joystick you're holding. Is that what you used to create all your graphics?
Yeah there was no mouse or anything. I did get a repetitive strain injury after about two or three years, doing this – click, click, click, click – on the joystick every day. My hand was strapped up for about six months.

Here's the review of *Batman*, from *Zzap!64*. They've awarded your graphics 94% and called them "virtually perfect". It doesn't get much better than that does it?
No it doesn't really. But in a bit I'll tell you what I lost.

OK, so let's go back to the beginning. How did you get into computers in the first place?
My dad was always into CB radio and that sort of technology, and he could see that computers were going to be the future. The first computer we got was a ZX81 which came with a small book of 1K games that I typed in. I then started programming on that. When the Spectrum was announced we were one of the first to order it and I can clearly remember the day when I saw the postman arriving with a large parcel. That was it – down tools for the rest of the day and get it all set up. The Spectrum was unbelievable. Sound, colour, no RAM pack wobbles.

When did you start getting into the graphics side?
I was always into art at school, in a roundabout way. It's not something I ever took seriously though. But when the Spectrum came along I got into messing around with graphics and altering stuff. There was nobody to tell you how to do it so I just went at it. It got serious once mum and dad realised they had to buy a second TV just for me as I was always on the Spectrum.

So how did you end up working at Ocean, exclusively on Commodore 64 games?
Well I never actually owned a Commodore 64. When I left school in 1984 I did a two-year college course in computer studies, so I was learning COBOL programming while still playing around with graphics and trying to write Spectrum games at home. Then in 1986 I finished my exams and started looking around for a proper job and I saw an advert for a graphics designer wanted at Ocean Software in Manchester. I thought why not? I had a dot-matrix printer so I created an A4 sheet of Spectrum graphics which included the Ocean logo on a waving flag that I'd done. I sent that off and was invited over for an interview. Even that was a marvellous thing for me, and when I arrived they said, "You can start next

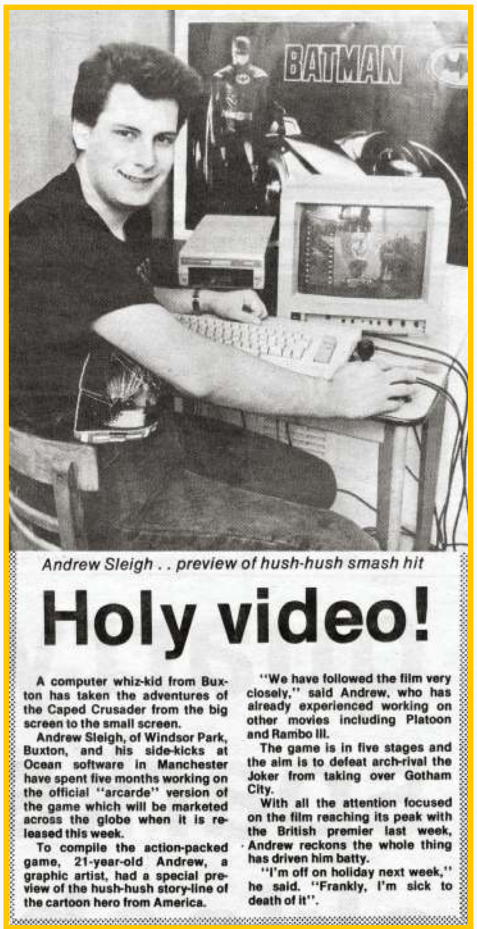
TITANIC
TRAVEL TRUNK
Beers
STEERAGE
BATMAN
THE MOVIE

> “It wasn’t really an interview. There were no tough questions. I don’t even think I asked how much I was going to be paid”
> Andrew Sleigh

Credit: John Depasquale photography

SELECTED TIMELINE

- **YIE AR KUNG-FU II** [1986] C64
- **MIKIE** [1986] C64
- **DOUBLE TAKE** [1987] C64
- **BASKET MASTER** [1987] C64
- **ARMY MOVES** [1987] C64
- **TAI-PAN** [1987] C64
- **PLATOON** [1987] C64
- **GRYZOR** [1988] C64
- **TYPHOON** [1988] C64
- **RAMBO III** [1988] C64
- **RENEGADE III: THE FINAL CHAPTER** [1989] C64
- **BATMAN** [1989] C64



Andrew Sleigh . . preview of hush-hush smash hit

Holy video!

A computer whiz-kid from Buxton has taken the adventures of the Caped Crusader from the big screen to the small screen.

Andrew Sleigh, of Windsor Park, Buxton, and his side-kicks at Ocean software in Manchester have spent five months working on the official "arcarde" version of the game which will be marketed across the globe when it is released this week.

To compile the action-packed game, 21-year-old Andrew, a graphic artist, had a special preview of the hush-hush story-line of the cartoon hero from America.

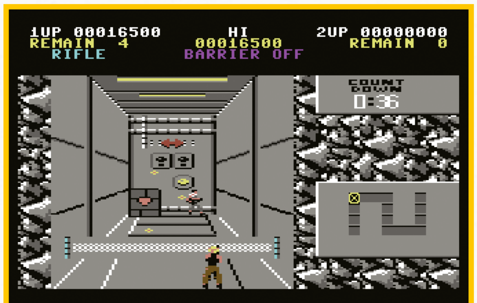
"We have followed the film very closely," said Andrew, who has already experienced working on other movies including Platoon and Rambo III.

The game is in five stages and the aim is to defeat arch-rival the Joker from taking over Gotham City.

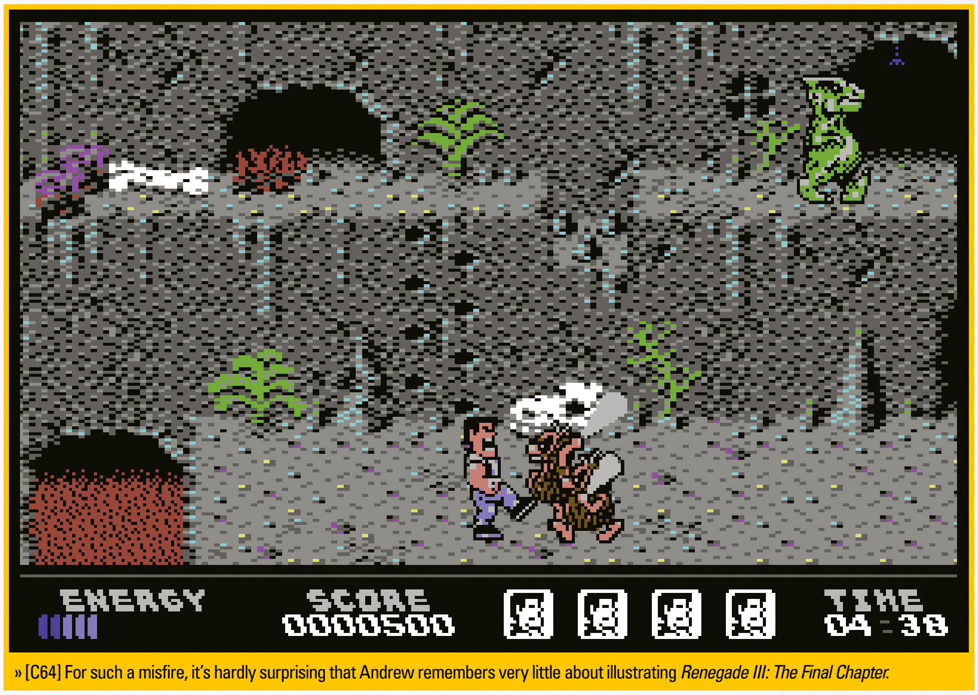
With all the attention focused on the film reaching its peak with the British premier last week, Andrew reckons the whole thing has driven him batty.

"I'm off on holiday next week," he said. "Frankly, I'm sick to death of it".

» Local lad Andrew's gaming exploits make waves in the sleepy spa town of Buxton.



» [C64] Andrew collaborated with Stephen Wahid to create the graphics for the Konami coin-op conversion *Gryzor.*



» [C64] For such a misfire, it's hardly surprising that Andrew remembers very little about illustrating *Renegade III: The Final Chapter.*

week"! It wasn't really an interview. There were no tough questions. I don't even think I asked how much I was going to be paid.

> "I was just a fresh-faced, 18-year-old country bumpkin from Buxton"
> Andrew Sleigh

Really? That's amazing. Did you think to apply to any other companies?

No, Ocean was the only one. And it was a fairly easy commute to Manchester for me as I lived in Buxton. So I turned up on day one and they took me over to my desk and said, "Here's a Commodore 64." A what? I'm doing what?

But you weren't about to turn down this opportunity?

No. I'd just left college and I thought, well, they're willing to pay me, this is good, this will do. Of course back then it was still cash in a brown envelope at the end of each week. I think it might have been 50 quid or something in those days. I felt like I'd landed on my feet. They must have needed somebody to work on the C64. I just had to start from scratch.

How did you find the C64 compared to the Spectrum?

It was completely different. And my first project was *Short Circuit*, a major licence! It wasn't like they put me in on a small game to start off with. I was trying to get to grips with it, these large pixels and how it all worked. I spent about a month or two on *Short Circuit*, but the programmer didn't like what I'd done and I was taken off it.

That must have been a blow, having just joined the company?

I was just a fresh-faced, 18-year-old country bumpkin from Buxton. But I could see what I'd done wasn't quite right. I moved on from that and did loads of other little bits with Steve Wahid, who took me under his wing a bit. I did things like the *Mikie* loading screen, and then I started to see how I needed to do things.

Did you enjoy creating the loading screens? Some of yours look great.

I'll take that as a big compliment. Loading screens were definitely one of my highlights. They were always the last things I did. When I'd done all the graphics for the game and the programmer was finishing off his bits, I'd spend about a week just doing the loading screen. The box art had probably come in by that point so I'd usually base them on that. I was quite proud of them so I used to stick my initials on them.

How long were you typically given to complete a game?

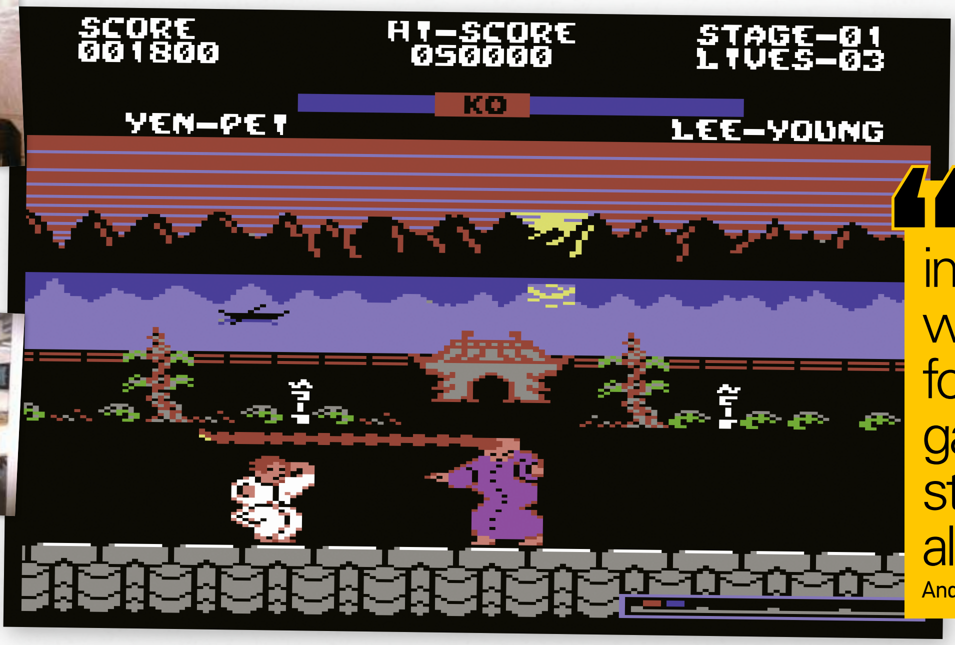
We were given three months for your average game. This makes me laugh because these days I can spend more than three months developing a website. For some of the bigger projects we'd get maybe six months. If it was an arcade conversion we'd spend the first week or so playing and studying the original arcade game.

In the 'arcade alley'? In the photos we've seen it doesn't look as good as it sounds.

It was just a narrow corridor really. There were some wooden cabinets on one side which had fold-down fronts. They'd stick the board in the bottom and plug it into a monitor. For games with special controllers they wired up what was needed. I remember for *WEC Le Mans* they didn't have a wheel so they used a resistor switch.

» Programmer Zach Townsend pictured in the Ocean dungeon. He teamed up with Andrew on half a dozen titles.

» Ocean's 'arcade alley' was filled with various coin-ops undergoing conversion. A procrastinator's dream no doubt.



» [C64] Andrew's first published game was *Yie Ar Kung-Fu II* in late-1986. The graphics and sound were great, the game not so much.

> Platoon was interesting as it was like making four separate games and stitching them all together
>
> Andrew Sleigh

What are your memories of Ocean's Manchester HQ?
Well it was an old Quaker building. They were on top and we all worked down below in the vaults, in the dungeon. The windows were up near the ceiling, with just a bit of light coming in. I think the graveyard was under the car park at the back. And then the office management stuff happened up a couple of flights of stairs. I do remember at one point the Quakers weren't happy with some violent game we were producing. I can't remember if it was one of mine, but there was some controversy and we had to rollback on something.

Did you socialise a lot with your colleagues?
Not really. I really should have moved closer rather than commuting every day. If I'd moved into Manchester I'd have probably socialised a lot more. I do remember going to one or two big industry shows. We'd bring everyone down for a couple of days. And we had a few office parties.

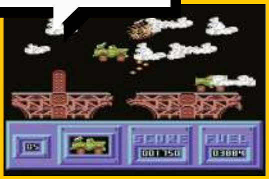
For *Army Moves* you teamed up with programmer Zach Townsend for the first time.
I got together with Zach and practically worked with him for the whole of my time at Ocean. We sat together and got on really well. We were a good team. People were like, "We need this game doing," and we just got on with it. And if they were happy with the end result, they'd give us another one to do.

And the next one that needed doing was the movie conversion *Platoon*.
That was one of the six-month projects. For that we just had a lot of stills from the movie. We certainly never got to see the film. I remember that I did all of the backgrounds and another guy whose name I forget [Martin McDonald] did the animation of the enemy jumping out of the water in the tunnels. *Platoon* was interesting as it was like making four separate games and stitching them all together. There was the jungle section, then the tunnels, then the bunker where the enemy was throwing stuff at you, then back into the jungle.

***Platoon* is also interesting because we think it was Ocean's first C64 game to use sprite overlays.**
Yeah we used them to add more detail. It was a double-height background sprite and then two high-res sprites placed over the top. That's how you got the black outlines and the colour ▶

SLEIGH'S BEST GAMES

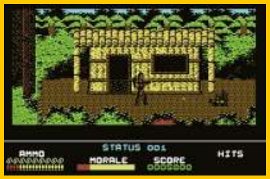
Great titles that Andrew's graphics brought to life



ARMY MOVES

Year: 1987

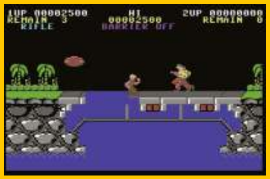
■ This conversion of Dynamic's Spectrum original benefits greatly from Andrew's colourful yet chunky sprites. Everyone remembers the Jeep-jumping opening stage – primarily because the game is so bloody difficult that most players struggle to progress beyond it.



PLATOON

Year: 1987

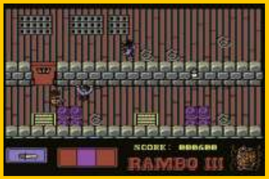
■ This is the title that laid down the template for many of Ocean's film licences, featuring varying gameplay sequences inspired by scenes from the movie. The bold use of colour and overlaid sprites results in an engrossing tie-in that's as pleasing to look at as it is to play.



GRYZOR

Year: 1988

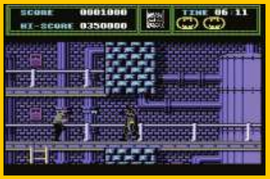
■ Andrew worked alongside his colleague Stephen Wahid to illustrate this solid conversion of the Konami coin-op. The graphics are kinda basic, but that's kinda OK as it means the version can emulate the speed and full-screen scrolling of the arcade game.



RAMBO III

Year: 1988

■ This was a tough ask for Ocean, as its adaptation of the second *Rambo* movie was borderline iconic on the C64. Yet Andrew and programmer Zach Townsend had a good old stab at it, producing a game that marries maze sections with a climactic 3D shoot-out.



BATMAN

Year: 1989

■ Although the impetus was with the lead 16-bit versions, the C64 game holds its own thanks to a combination of assorted game styles, amazing audio and wonderfully atmospheric art from Andrew. In our book it's Ocean's best movie licence for the C64.

» Ocean staff pictured on a visit to London's ECTS show in April 1990. From left to right: Emma Rollo, Andrew Deakin, Zach Townsend and Andrew.

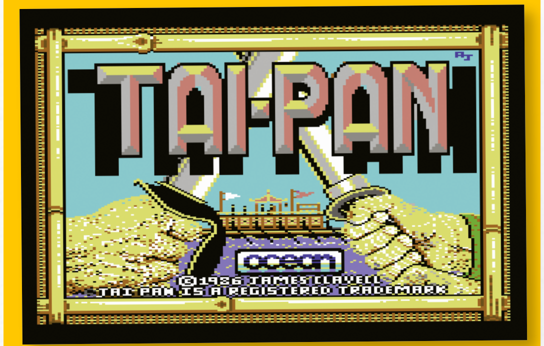
» Another photo from the 1990 ECTS show. James Higgins, centre, holds court while Andrew and Robert Hemphill look on.

THE SAVING OF TAI-PAN

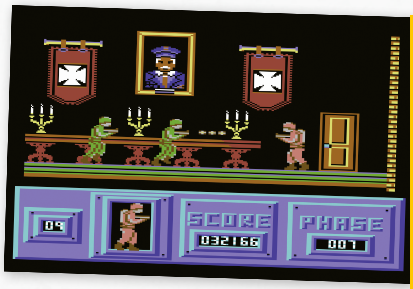
Andrew recalls a last-minute salvage job

■ If you wondered how close to the wire some projects went you only have to look at Ocean's *Tai-Pan*. This strategy adventure game, based on James Clavell's epic novel, was being developed out-of-house by a team in Telford – and it was already behind schedule when software manager Gary Bracey stepped in. "One Friday afternoon Gary came into the office," remembers Andrew, picking up the story. "He says, 'We're not happy with some of the graphics in *Tai-Pan*. Can you go and spend a weekend in Telford and see what you can do?' The game was supposed to be coming out the following week! So Gary drove me to Telford, put me up in a B&B and I spent the weekend doing whatever I could to tidy it up. Then Monday morning I was back in the office to bang out a quick loading screen. Then the next thing I know the game is out!"

Despite Andrew's 11th-hour efforts, the graphics didn't pass muster at *Zzap!64*, with Paul Sumner branding them "decidedly uninspiring". Oh well.



» [C64] Now you know why the hands in this loading screen look a little rough.



» [C64] You'd only get to see the final stage of *Army Moves* if you were a god-level player – or a cheat.

> "After finishing a game we were told to go and have a week off and come back refreshed for the next one"
> Andrew Sleigh

underneath. It did need a good sprite multiplexor to make it work. I assume once one of the developers worked out what they needed to do that underlying bit of code was shared around. It's hard to think of the stuff we actually did in those days. We were working with proper pixels and limited colours and seeing how many sprites we could multiply down the screen.

Your next credit was the arcade conversion *Gryzor*, but it doesn't really look much like your style.
That one's a bit of a blur. It might have been one of those where I was asked to do a few bits here or a background there. I was always learning so I might have been trying out some new techniques or something.

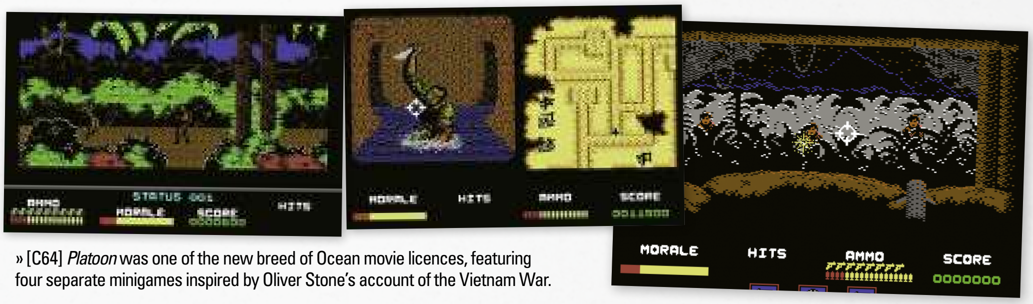
Was *Rambo III* any more memorable?
I do remember the sort-of-3D section. I used several different-sized sprites to give the impression of the enemy missiles coming towards you. It was a big game at the time, but you know to me it was just another job. That one might have taken six months or whatever.

We've heard that developers were rewarded if you finished a game on time?
Yeah we got bonuses after every game, as well as being paid our regular wage. And after finishing a game we were told to go and have a week off and come back refreshed for the next one. It was a dream job really. Later on I was bringing home like £400 cash every week – still in a brown envelope. I'd be out buying music CDs and concert tickets. I probably should have saved a bit more.

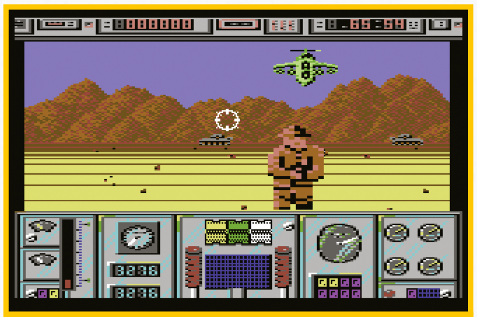
Let's move onto *Batman*. This must have been a massive title to be involved in?
Yeah it was massive. We actually got invited to watch the film before it was released but in the end it never happened. We were three or four months into the game by then anyway so it didn't really matter. We knew roughly what the story was and somebody must have given us the main plot points to base the stages on. I based most of my stuff on the comic books because they were already out. I think the loading screen was based on the cover artwork of the official comic adaptation. Like *Platoon* there was a lot going on – the bits with the Batrope, the Batmobile chase. I think we probably spent eight months on that one.

It was worth it. A number one hit, amazing reviews. You must have been on such a high, yet it appears to be the last game you worked on. What happened?
Well what do we say? I think I spent 1990 doing practically nothing. We'd finished *Batman* and Zach started messing around with consoles, one of the Nintendo systems. So he was off trying to learn that and there was nothing really that came along for me to do. I still went to work every day and was just messing around with stuff, taking long lunches. I kept asking if there was anything for me to do and the answer was always no. Whether they were expecting me to come up with something I don't know. It was kind of a strange time.

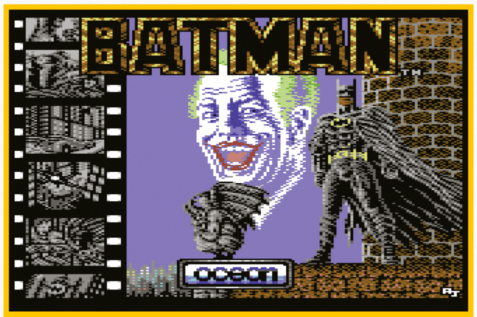
Did you want to move onto consoles or the 16-bit computers?
No, not back then. I was never really into the Amiga, there was just something about it. I didn't gel with the way things were going. Then that December I was ill and missed the Christmas party. I came back in at the start of January and was called into the office and it was like, "Right, we don't need you anymore, here's your final pay packet, get your stuff and leave." And that was that. It was not unexpected really. I knew it was coming.



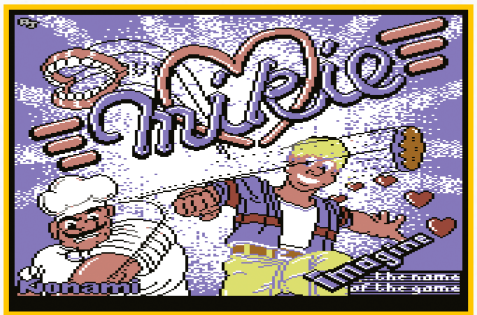
» [C64] *Platoon* was one of the new breed of Ocean movie licences, featuring four separate minigames inspired by Oliver Stone's account of the Vietnam War.



» [C64] The final stage from *Rambo III* was evidently inspired by the 3D scenes from *Operation Thunderbolt*.



» [C64] The *Batman* loading screen was based on the cover of the movie's comic-book adaptation.

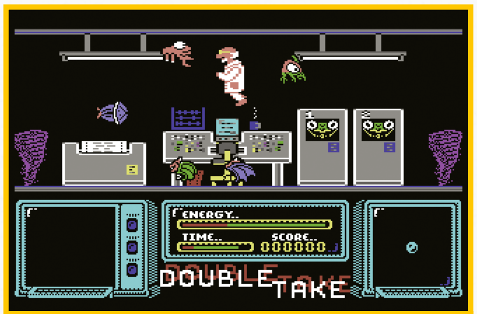


» [C64] For loading screens like *Mikie*, Andrew was tasked with replicating Bob Wakelin's excellent cover art.

To return to the clipping from the *Buxton Advertiser* newspaper, it ends with you saying, "Frankly I'm sick to death of it." You were obviously talking about all the hype surrounding *Batman*, but after four years at Ocean, had you started to feel the same way about game development?
Maybe subconsciously I'd had enough as the big movie tie-ins did take six months or more to do compared to the shorter arcade conversions. Maybe it was down to having to squeeze all of the different gameplay types into one project. One of the Ocean guys did get me an interview at another developer in Manchester but I don't think my heart was really into it. I was asking myself if I really wanted to do this anymore. By that point I'd done school, college, work. I'd got mates who'd gone off to university and then had a year off. So I decided that I wasn't going to do anything for six months until I worked out what I wanted to do next.

So what did you end up doing?
Again, it was one of those fortunate things. I went down to the job centre one day and there was a vacancy for a computer programmer in Buxton. So I nipped around the corner to see them and showed them my CV and it was another case of, "Can you start next week?"

Was there a Commodore 64 on your desk when you turned up?
Ha, no. It was a PC. The job was for a C programmer. I'd previously learnt COBOL and done a bit of machine language on the Spectrum, so I learnt C quickly and then I spent ten years there developing software. I landed on my feet again but I left games behind.



» [C64] *Double Take* was one of several Spectrum games that Andrew helped port to the Commodore 64.

Have you ever considered getting back into games?
I'm trying to get back into game development now. That's a side thing that I've been working on for the past year or so. I'm sure I've still got a game inside me, fully developed. You know I spent hours creating stuff on the Spectrum that never saw the light of day. It almost did. I tried to get a couple of things in a magazine but they never quite made it. So now I'm using the Godot game engine and I'm learning 3D graphics as well. I'm 54 and I'm learning stuff that I didn't even learn at school when my brain was fresh. But who knows? It's a different world now. We'll see.

You mentioned your unreleased Spectrum stuff. Did you still have copies of that?
No, it's all lost, due to cassette tapes failing. My biggest regret is that all of my development disks and everything from Ocean got thrown out, about 12 years ago. I left Ocean with everything – all of that computer kit was at home. It's all gone now.

Looking back, how would you sum up those four years at Ocean?
It was a great time. I was so free-wheeling I was happy to just do the graphics. I never got involved in office politics or anything like that. For me it wasn't work. Not really. You were playing games, you were producing games, you were creating something. And in central Manchester too. It was my first job and it was the best job I ever had. *

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

Post your questions at retrogamer.net/forum

Merman: What reference sources did you use for the licensed games (*Platoon* and *Batman* in particular)?

We never got to see the films before they were released. My references were usually a small number of photos from the film sets, and for *Batman* I also used the comic book based on the movie.

Mlucifersam: A lot of staff members have some outrageous stories about shenanigans that went on in the basement at 6 Central Street. Have you got any tales to tell?

I don't have any specific outrageous stories to add to the rich tapestry of life at the Ocean office, but I'm sure there may be some stories still to be told of events out of the office…

DRS: What are your memories of Ocean cofounder David Ward, who recently passed away?

It was sad news to hear of David's passing, just as I'm starting to look back on those days. During my time at Ocean I think I only ever went upstairs once, and that was for my interview, so I don't have any outstanding memories. But I'm grateful for being given the chance to play a small part in the creation of some great games.

Mlucifersam: How do you look back on your time at Ocean? Other staff say it was a mix of being a dream job, a massive laugh and, on occasion, a nightmare with tight deadlines and not enough development time etc.

That is difficult to say. The amount of a game's artwork I was responsible for varied. For some games, I was the designer, illustrator and the production artist, while other games, I may have only had one or two of those jobs… plus, the time worked on them is weirdly like a blur, where you remember all the things you did but time stood still while you did it.

Capcom Vs SNK: Millennium Fight 2000

NIGHTMARE MATCH OF THE CENTURY?

» DREAMCAST » 2000 » CAPCOM

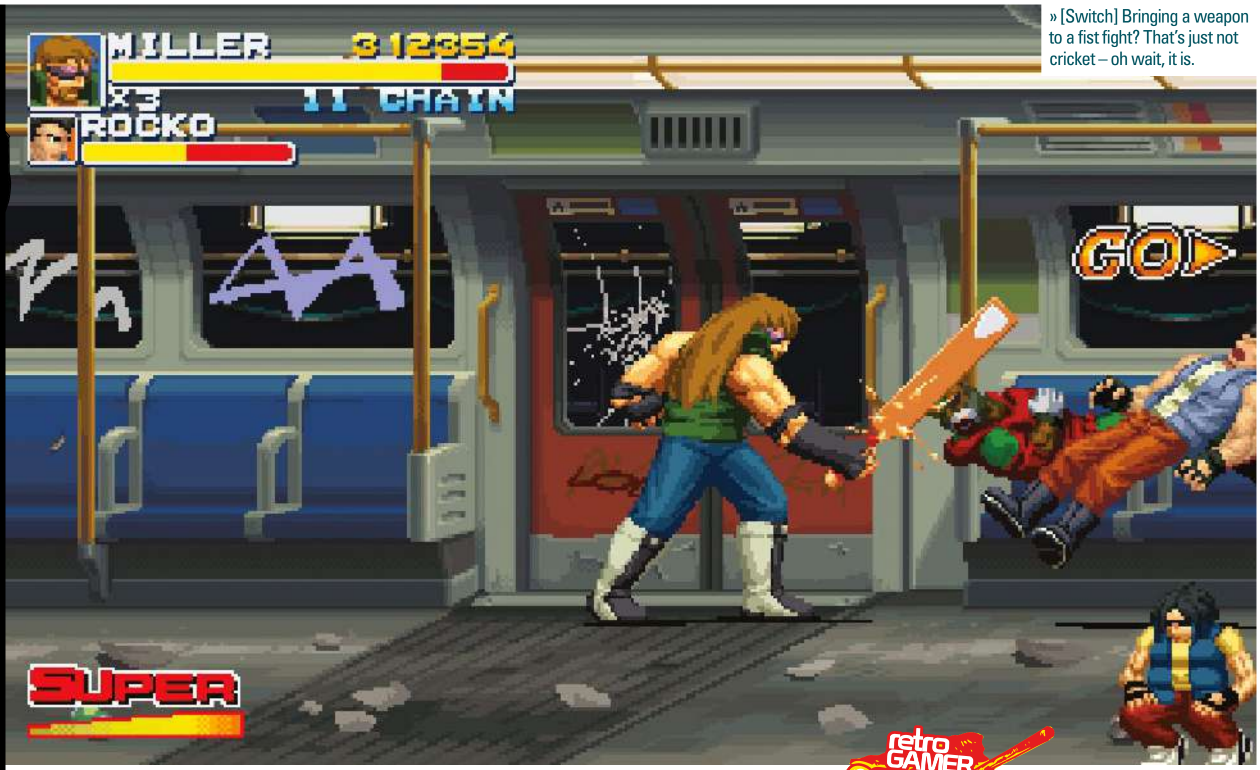
I can still remember the first time I saw *Capcom Vs SNK* in my local Sega Park – the attract mode was showing a back-alley brawl, with a spotlight casting large shadows of the fighters against the back wall. I eagerly dropped a coin in the machine, and everything started to go wrong. The oddly slanted character select screen made it hard to see all the fighters at a glance, and when I picked Ryu, a whole row of characters suddenly disappeared. I picked Sakura and another lot went away, leaving me with nobody that I liked. Then there were only four buttons, rather than the six I was used to, and Sakura felt really weak. Bitterly disappointed, I decided I'd stick to other fighting games.

Most of my problems with the game came down to its unique Ratio system. You get four points to make up a team of two to four fighters – strong characters like Sagat and Geese Howard are worth three, weaker ones like Dhalsim and Benimaru just one. This alternative method of balancing characters was a bold choice by Capcom, especially in a flagship crossover game, and one that wasn't well explained in the arcade.

Thankfully, my friend James borrowed a Dreamcast and *Capcom Vs SNK* from a mutual friend of ours not too long after. With a bit of time to understand the game's systems and experiment with characters, my opinion of the game quickly became more positive. I even came around to the four-button control scheme as it suited the Dreamcast pad perfectly. With my gameplay woes resolved I could finally appreciate the game's audiovisual presentation, which is still amongst the greatest that 2D fighters have ever offered – I particularly love the stage that opens with a retro racing game sequence. *Capcom Vs SNK* is now a favourite of mine, which goes to show that while first impressions can stick, they're always worth questioning. *

CHUN-LI
R↑2
CAPCOM

» There's a distinct fighting theme this month as we take to the streets in Final Vendetta, tackle Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge and pore over Bitmap Books' lavish tome dedicated to The King Of Fighters series



» [Switch] Bringing a weapon to a fist fight? That's just not cricket – oh wait, it is.

retro GAMER SIZZLER

Final Vendetta

FIRST AND LAST? LET'S HOPE NOT

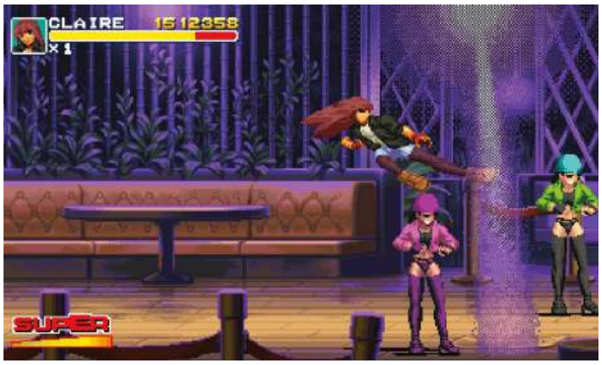
INFORMATION

- » **FORMAT REVIEWED:** SWITCH
- » **ALSO ON:** PS4, PS5, XBOX ONE, XBOX SERIES X/S, PC
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £22.49
- » **PUBLISHER:** NUMSKULL GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** BITMAP BUREAU
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

The Syndic8 gang probably could have taken over London, had they not made one key mistake – kidnapping the younger sister of Claire Sparks, a martial arts expert from Essex. With the help of brawler Duke Sancho and ex-wrestler Miller T Williams, she takes to the streets to bring down the gang and bring her sister back safely.

Final Vendetta is a scrolling beat-'em-up that has been heavily inspired by the classics of the genre, so you know the drill – walk to the right, pummel bad guys and try to survive by eating the food you find in bins and phone boxes. As you may have guessed, each character has their own specialisms, with Duke excelling at launching enemies into the air and Miller possessing strong grapples. The well-animated sprites look like they could have come straight from a late-era Neo Geo game, and the dance soundtrack by Featurecast and Utah Saints will make *Streets Of Rage* fans feel right at home. You'll also spot the DNA of other favourites, such as the car-smashing bonus stage that pays homage to *Final Fight*.

Rather than being stuck in the past, the developer Bitmap Bureau has furnished the game with some nice modern features. The four-button control scheme gives you a wealth of moves – you can run and dodge, attack downed foes and even block incoming attacks. You also have the opportunity to juggle airborne enemies, which is useful not only for dealing extra damage but for high scores too, as building



» [Switch] Make an Essex-girl joke around Claire and she's likely to kick your face off.

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Final Vendetta*'s developer Bitmap Bureau is an independent studio founded in 2016. The team is best known for its 2019 release *Xeno Crisis*, a *Smash TV*-style shooter for the Mega Drive, Neo Geo, Dreamcast and modern platforms. The team also collaborated with Henk Nieborg on *Battle Axe* in 2021.

✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH

DARRAN

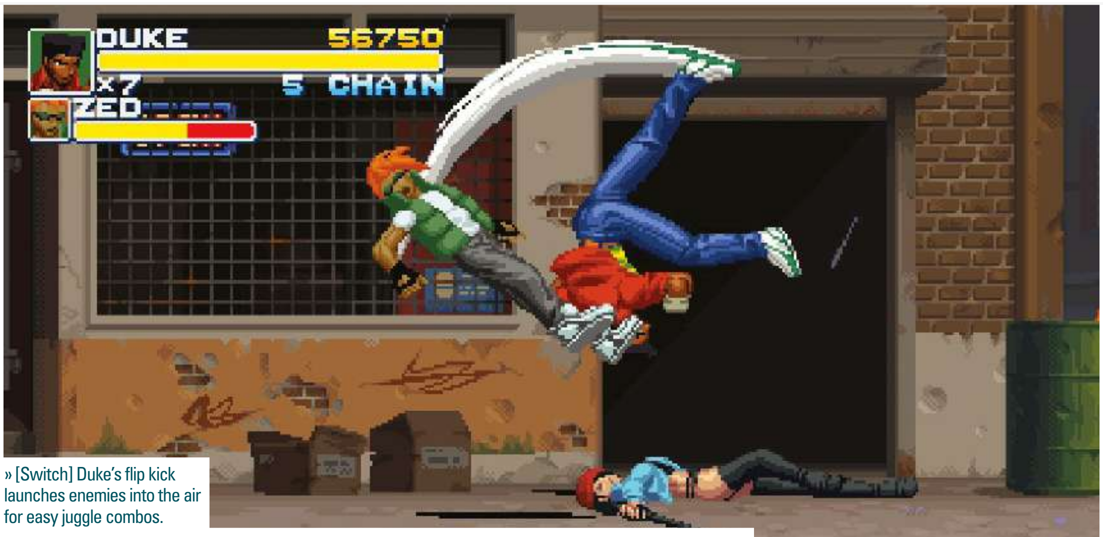
Pocky & Rocky Reshrined

This has just turned up and so far it's an excellent remaster. We'll have a review ready for next issue.

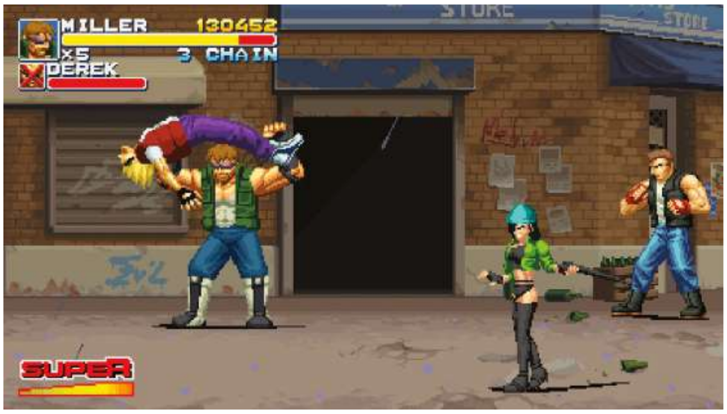
NICK

Final Vendetta

Yes, I've chosen this over *Sonic Origins*, which should tell you roughly all you need to know.



» [Switch] Duke's flip kick launches enemies into the air for easy juggle combos.



» [Switch] Being an ex-wrestler, Miller packs powerful grapples like this Argentine backbreaker drop.

combos is the key to picking up some extra points.

All of these extra moves would be pointless if you don't need to use them, but specific enemies pose different types of danger so there's no one-size-fits-all strategy. For example, trying to kick the gas mask-wearing enemies while they're down is a bad idea because they can attack from the ground, while the boxing women block your striking combos, necessitating grapple attacks. This extends to the bosses too – we had terrible trouble with The Gentleman at first, until we realised the power of the dodge. Seemingly insurmountable enemies can be overcome with a bit of thought, and there's certainly no danger that you'll settle into an endless routine of flying kicks.

Although tactical thinking helps, *Final Vendetta* is no walk in the park and it's perfectly possible to lose a life right from the first stage. If you're knocked down while holding a weapon, it's gone for good, and if you lose all your lives there are no continues, though each stage does have a hidden extra life to find. The game offers easy and hard difficulty settings, with the former affording you more lives, fewer enemies and extra opportunities to attack downed foes.

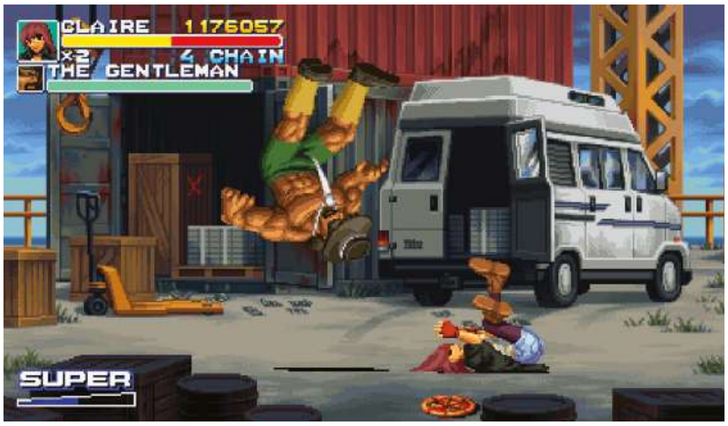
CLAIRE
x7
3 CHAIN
DOUGLAS
SUPER

» [Switch] Super moves relieve some pressure, but also cost life if the meter isn't full.

DUKE
x2
6 CHAIN
JAX
SUPER

» [Switch] Running attacks can be very powerful, but no technique is ideal for every enemy.

» [Switch] The Gentleman is a wrestler who can demolish you if you've not sussed him out.



Apart from the main game, there are Boss Attack and Survival modes to unlock and a fun Versus mode for competitive play, as well as the option to unlock various achievements for beating stages, performing long combos and achieving high rankings.

If we have one complaint, it's the way that environmental hazards are introduced. You'll get no warning as some very fast barrels are launched your way in the third stage, and while you can destroy them, your first instinct might be to block – a completely ineffective strategy. Memorisation helps, but only after the first run. In the next stage, you do get advance warning of environmental hazards, although these are more dangerous as they're even faster and indestructible. This is the only notable aspect of the game which felt inconsistent.

Putting that minor quibble aside, *Final Vendetta* is a great game. The challenge is tough but broadly well-judged, as the depth of your combat options ensures that you always have different ways to take on foes. The 2D artwork looks lovely, but you almost forget that because the music is so good – it's a true highlight of the game, and almost worth the price of admission alone. The whole package leaves us hoping that the game isn't as final as its title suggests, because we'd happily return for another bout. ✱

In a nutshell

***Final Vendetta* stands proud among the classics and modern hits of the beat-'em-up genre. If you've ever enjoyed a brawler, be sure to check it out.**

» Score **92%**

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

FINAL FIGHT

▼ SOMETHING NEW

STREETS OF RAGE 4

RETRO ROUNDUP

WE LOOK AT THE LATEST RETRO-RELATED RELEASES

✱ PICK OF THE MONTH

Sonic Origins

» System: PS4 (Tested), PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S, Switch, PC **» Buy it from:** Online **» Buy it for:** £32.99+

This collection bundles together *Sonic The Hedgehog, Sonic 2, Sonic 3 & Knuckles* and *Sonic CD*, all rebuilt in the Retro Engine. New animated intro and ending movies have been added, as well as the Drop Dash from *Sonic Mania*. There's a Museum section full of illustrations, music and videos, which can be unlocked using coins earned during gameplay.

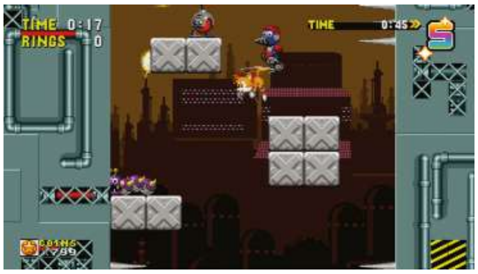
These versions of the games are mostly very good. Tails is playable in every game and Knuckles has been added to *Sonic 1*. Special-stage performance is improved in every game with smooth scaling and rotation, and a polygonal half-pipe for *Sonic 2*. There's even a nice new Blue Spheres mode for *Sonic 3 & Knuckles*, with brand-new stage designs. Mission mode offers some pretty creative challenges, some of which will tax even series veterans.

Due to music rights problems, some stages in *Sonic 3* use the music first heard in *Sonic & Knuckles Collection* for PC, rather than the Mega Drive music. Some of the tracks sound fine, but the arrangements used for others are flat and lifeless. What's more, certain other tracks have been replaced to avoid duplication, and generally not for the better.

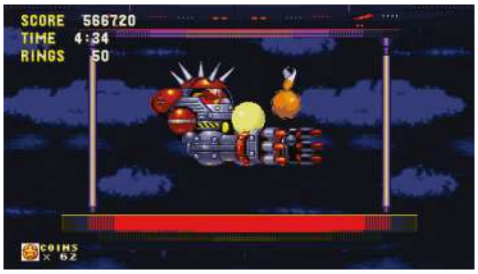
In a truly baffling decision, you aren't given the option to pick and choose your enhancements. You either play games in Anniversary mode with 16:9 display, new moves and infinite lives, or Classic mode with none of those things. There are also some minor bugs, and while the Retro Engine feels authentic in most circumstances, there are select instances where the games don't behave the same as the Mega Drive originals.

These are still classic platform games and the new additions will make *Sonic Origins* the preferred way to play them for many players, but Mega Drive purists may wish to consider other options like *Sonic Jam*.

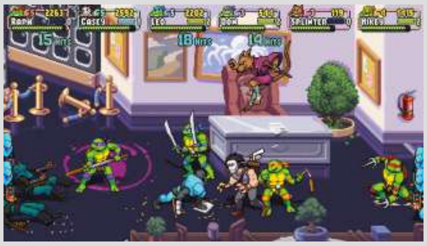
>> Score **80%**



» [PS4] Mission mode is full of tricky challenges like this dangerous flying ascent.



» [PS4] The Big Arms boss is restored in Sonic's route through *Sonic 3 & Knuckles*.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge

» System: PC (tested) PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X
» Buy it for: £19.99+ **» Buy it from:** Online

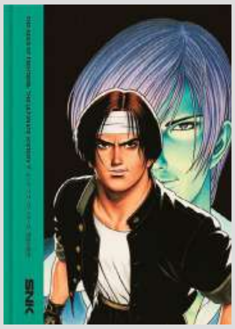
Typical. You wait ages for a great side-scrolling fighter to appear, then two come along at once. Tribute Games' latest release is an absolute belter that looks as good as it hits. The fighting mechanics greatly improve on Konami's original action games, with a variety of attacks, dodges and throws that can be pulled off with just a few buttons. It's absolutely packed with humour too, thanks to the hilarious antics of the many Foot Soldiers and the lively voice cast. Each of the seven playable characters have their own strengths and weaknesses and the rather chaotic multiplayer caters for up to six players. It's only really let down by a lack of extras and the brutal difficulty of Arcade mode.

DARRAN JONES

>> Score **80%**

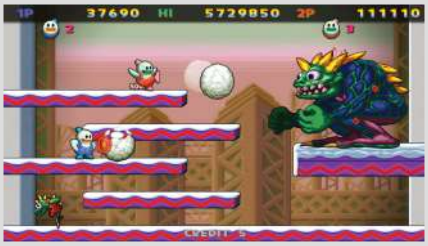
The King Of Fighters: The Ultimate History

» Buy it for: £34.99
» Buy it from: bitmapbooks.co.uk



This hefty tome is an art book with a substantial amount of interview content, offering plenty of value for fans of SNK's crossover fighting series. It concentrates largely on the main series and its remakes, with the Neo Geo Pocket games being the only other games to gain any significant attention – the *Maximum Impact* series is only briefly acknowledged and there's nothing on games like *NeoWave* or the mobile spin-offs. The games that are included are covered in great depth, with plenty of concept documents and sketches to see alongside key art and in-game imagery such as screenshots, backgrounds and sprites. The book also does a good job of highlighting what a phenomenon the series was in Japan during the Nineties, and you're highly likely to learn something new by reading it.

NICK THORPE



Snow Bros: Nick & Tom Special

» System: Switch (tested)
» Buy it for: £17.99+ **» Buy it from:** Online, retail

It's great to see Toaplan games making a comeback and *Snow Bros* is tremendous fun. This is a decent remaster with nice-looking graphics and redesigned levels that make use of the Switch's 16:9 display. While you can listen to the original game's music, you can't access the original pixel art, which seems a bit of a shame. Taking down enemies by turning them into snowballs is still plenty of fun and it's nice that many more levels and bosses have been added to the base game. While we're pleased with the inclusion of Survival and Time Attack modes, locking the fun-sounding Monster Challenge mode behind a DLC paywall on the digital release is less impressive. It's included on the physical release so go for that version instead.

DARRAN JONES

>> Score **62%**

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ROLE-PLAYING VIDEOGAMES IS HERE

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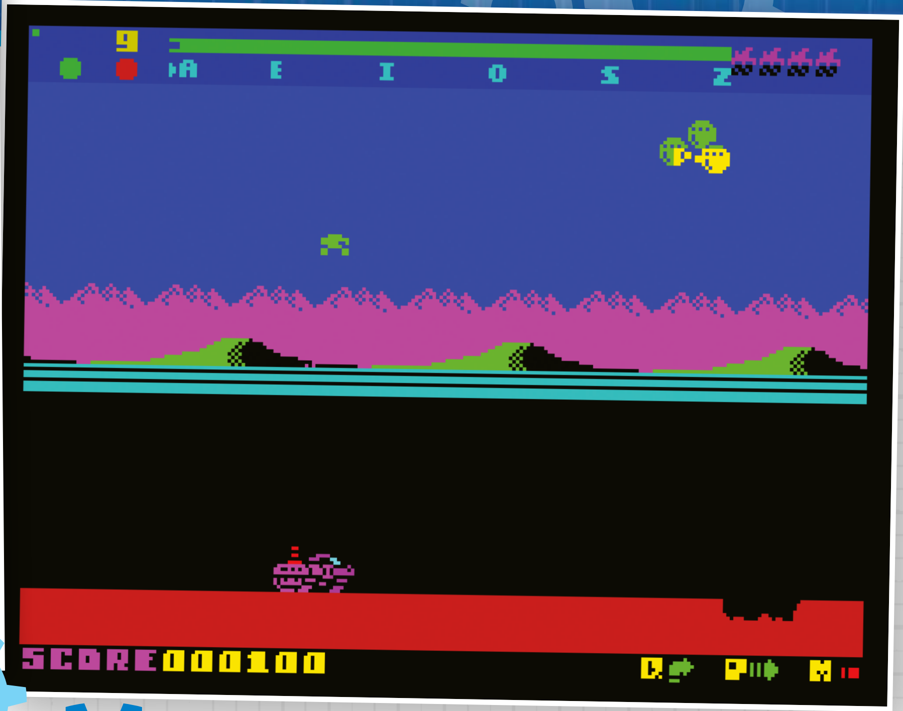
PLAYER 1
30150
HI-SCORE
30000
Time 029:05
EXTRA
50000
ROUND-01



<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM] GABAM'S MOON RANGER REPRODUCES THE LEGENDARY MOON PATROL, RIGHT DOWN TO THE BOUNCING TYRES. --->

THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE/>

<INTRO> THE C64 IS HAVING ANOTHER STELLAR YEAR WITH MULTIPLE RELEASES AS IT CELEBRATES ITS 40TH BIRTHDAY, BUT OTHER FORMATS ARE DOING WELL TOO. THE MSXDEV 2022 IS SHAPING UP NICELY, THE SPECTRUM (ALSO 40) SHOWS NO SIGNS OF SLOWING DOWN AND THE CONSOLE HOMEBREW SCENE IS THRIVING. KEEP READING THIS COLUMN FOR MORE REVIEWS, INTERVIEWS AND NEWS ON WHAT IS HAPPENING. </INTRO>

<!--- JONATHAN CAULDWELL WITH HIS ZX81 (TOP) AND LUCA CARMINATI (BELOW). --->

<MAIN HEADER>

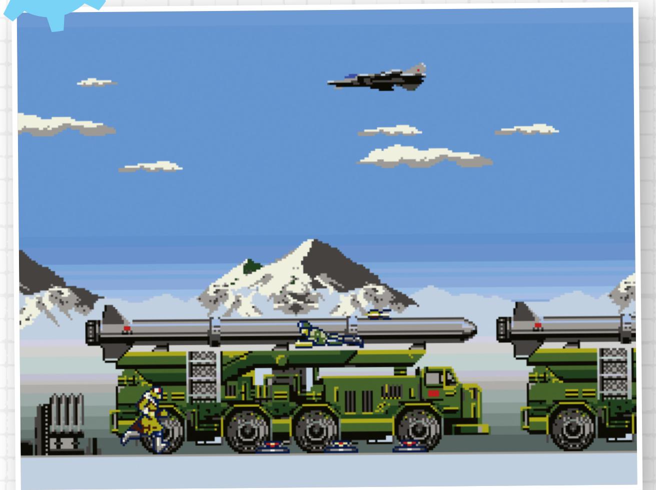
ARCADE ATTACK

<INTRO> CLASSIC ARCADE GAMES CONTINUE TO INTEREST HOMEBREW CREATORS ACROSS DIFFERENT FORMATS, WITH NEW CONVERSIONS AND TITLES INSPIRED BY CLASSIC COIN-OPS </INTRO>

<BODY> **The ZX81 recently received *Zeddytron 2081* by Walter Rissi (*Robotron: 2084*) and *Zonkey Kong* by Don Crawford & Dave Spinnett (*Donkey Kong*).** Jonathan Cauldwell turned his attention to the system too, with *Zedi Blaster* (based on *Bomberman*) and *Big Baps*. "I thought it would be fun to test myself on a more-limited machine and see if I could create something that would be fun to play; it would be all about raw gameplay and nothing else. I'd seen plenty of Spectrum *Burger Time* conversions and they all stopped the game while the burgers dropped, and I wanted to create a ZX81 game that didn't do that."

Both games support the Chroma add-on for colour display. "It's relatively straightforward and there's plenty of documentation online. Chroma has two operating modes, one with a Spectrum-style attributes area and another where each character has 8x1 pixel attributes." What's next? "I've done other ZX81 conversions based on *Centipede* and *Defender* and am quite happy with the way those turned out. I'm probably most interested in little gameplay mechanics and quirks though, stealing an idea from one arcade game and putting it into another to create something different and unique. Early arcade games are a good source of interesting mechanics."

Jotd (Jean-François Fabre) launched *Scramble* for Amiga, with an added two-player mode. His next



<!--- [AMIGA] DANTE'S DEVELOPMENT ON GREEN BERET CONTINUES, INCLUDING THE JET THAT HURRIES PLAYERS ALONG IF THEY STAND STILL. --->

KILLER CONVERSIONS

ZOO KEEPER
(PICO-8)

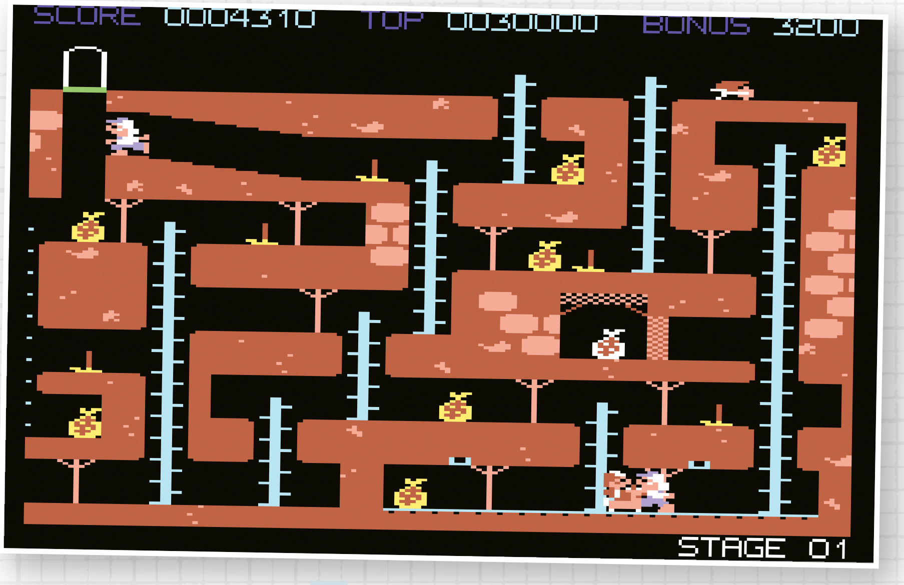
<Paul Hammond's latest is a recreation of a Taito hidden gem, as you jump over the animals and try to keep them inside the bricks. />

1942
(Amiga)

<The recent demo proves how accurate this conversion from RetroDNA is, but the developer has copyright concerns over its possible release. />

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**



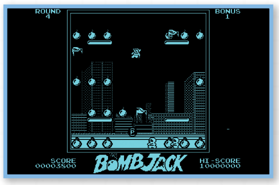
project? "I'd like to do *Phoenix*, *Time Pilot* and *Galaxians*, but I'm currently set on *Karate Champ VS.* I always loved that game, but this is a bigger project, with some Z80 reverse-engineering to do with the computer AI. There's no point of porting a game if it doesn't play almost like the original. I started coding games only recently, inspired by what McGeezer did with *Bomb Jack* and *Rygar.*"

Neeso Games' Amiga port of *Jackal* is also worth playing. "*Jackal* might seem a simple game but there are many little things in the gameplay that you don't notice if you play casually," says Federico Nisoli. "I had to use what the Scorpion Engine provides to reproduce the original gameplay." The AmiGameJam release had two levels and development continues.

Luca Carminati has wowed C64 users with *Bagman* (cloned by *Gilligan's Gold* and *Bagitman*) and *Tutankham* (never officially released on C64). "What drove me to code games of this type were the passion but above all the nostalgia," we're told. "As a kid, I literally fell in love with arcade games." That included *Ms Pac-Man*, which Luca remade as *Lady-Pac* with procedurally generated mazes. "*Bagman* has always been one of my favourite games. Being able to recreate it from scratch has given me many emotions and many good memories."

As the Forthcoming Attractions boxout proves, there are more arcade conversions incoming. And you don't have to insert coins to play. Visit bit.ly/homebrew235 for links and interviews. </BODY>

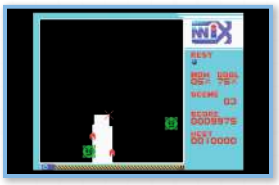
<INTRO> MORE ARCADE TREATS ARE ON THE WAY... </INTRO>



BOMB JACK

(Electron)

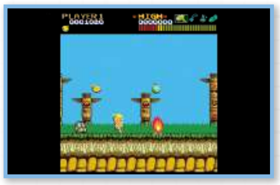
<Snuggsy187's latest project uses some clever character masking to recreate the frantic bomb-defusing antics of the Tehkan classic. />



MIX

(MSX)

Entered into the MSXDev 2022 competition, this is a good recreation of Taito's area-filling *Qix* with increasingly difficult levels. />



WONDER BOY AGA

(Amiga)

<This is another AmiGameJam entry. Development continues with the Scorpion Engine (more on that next issue) to recreate the arcade classic. />

LIVES 3
ITEM
HEALTH

NEWS BYTES

<INTRO> THE LATEST NEWS BYTES TO ENJOY, NOW ORGANISED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

<**ZX Spectrum:** QuantumSheep's *Spectrum 40th Birthday Game Mix Tape* bundle on itch.io raised $6,300 for charity SpecialEffect, including new game *The Lava Birds*, which is available at quantumsheep.itch.io/the-lava-birds Team Moritz updated its itch.io page with the Moritz games and shooter *Pi-dentity*. Buy them now at zxamaze.itch.io/>

<**Amiga:** Preorders are open for *Jump!* based on the Atari game *Yoomp* at amigajump.com And AB Narwhal released a demo of platformer *Duckstroma* (previously available for NES, MSX and ZX Spectrum). It's available to buy at narwhal.itch.io/duckstroma/>

<**Amstrad CPC:** Krappy Games released *Retrobloc*, inspired by the 3D *Tetris* game *Blockout*. Play it at krappygamez.itch.io/retrobloc-cpc/>

<**Atari 8-Bit:** Felipe De Toro converted the 1985 Dinamic hit *Abu Simbel Profanation* – bit.ly/abuatari has more info./>

<**C64:** Psytronik launched *Miner 2019er* – a prequel to *Miner 2049er* with permission from Bill Hogue. It can be found at psytronik.itch.io/miner2019er/>

<**Game Boy:** Loading Studio's *Flying Arrows* funded on Kickstarter – uniquely, your character can stand on the arrows it fires. Try the demo at bit.ly/flyingarrows-demo />

<**Mega Drive:** Head to sashadarko.com/sacred-line-ii for a free demo of SashaDarko's horror game *Sacred Line II*.

<**NES:** Entries have started for the NESDev Compo 2022, curated by Matt Hughson, with entries published on a physical cartridge. More at itch.io/jam/nesdev-2022/>

<**PET:** Milasoft launched a trio of new titles – *Bugg*, *BrickBlasta* and a conversion of Jeff Minter's *Gridrunner*. Find them at milasoft64.itch.io/>

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

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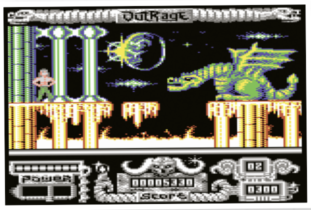
CHAMPION CODER

BERND BUCHEGGER (AKA PANTHER)

<INTRO> THE COSMOS DESIGNS CODER EXPLAINS WHY HIS GAME, OUTRAGE, TOOK SO LONG TO APPEAR </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: AUSTRIA WEBSITE: OUTRAGEGAME.COM, COSMOS-C64.COM
FORMAT: C64 RECENTLY CODED: LIONS OF THE UNIVERSE (C64)
DEVELOPING: OUTRAGE (C64)/>

<!--- BERND WITH THE PROTOVISION (CARTRIDGE) AND PSYTRONIK (DISK) VERSIONS OF THE FINISHED OUTRAGE. --->



WHEN DID DEVELOPMENT START?

<Arnold Blüml and Hannes Sommer invited me to found Cosmos Designs. At that time *Hawkeye* set the benchmark in the run-and-gun genre. I devised my own game mechanics that I had not seen before and started coding, graphics, animation and level design for *Outrage* in 1990. At that time, I attended a boarding school which meant that I could only work during weekends. />

WAS IT GOING TO BE PUBLISHED BACK THEN?

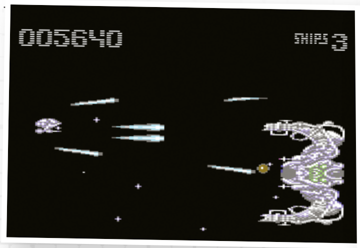
<Boeder announced a talent competition in *64er* magazine in 1993, promising to award the top three with full publication. The winners were published – and *Outrage* was in the top three! I had to wait several months again before Boeder informed me they had cancelled all C64 activities due to the market decline. I tried to sell *Outrage* to CP Verlag but got rejected again. I packed the whole project into a drawer. />

HOW DID DEVELOPMENT RESTART?

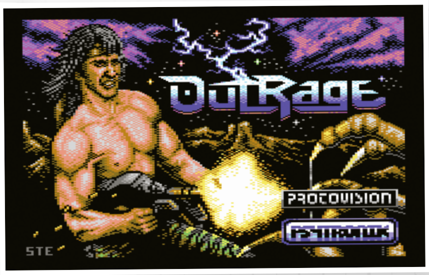
<The Cosmos Designs homepage included the first officially published in-game screenshots of *Outrage* and it got listed on Games That Weren't. In 2005 Protovision offered to finalise and release it – but struggled without source code documentation. A second attempt started in 2010 with Psytronik; Steve Day contributed a fantastic new title pic. In 2018 Protovision and Psytronik joined forces. There were 23 people involved in pushing *Outrage* over the finish line and in December 2020 it officially released. />

WAS IT A WORLD RECORD?

<We were convinced that we could easily beat *Duke Nukem Forever* (14 years and 43 days) as 'Longest development period for a videogame'. I applied for a new category 'Longest development limbo for a videogame'. I finally got an email from Guinness Book Of Records saying they are not supporting historical records anymore. Our last chapter did not get its happy ending – if anyone knows how to solve this, please let me know! />



<!--- [C64] HANNES SOMMER OF COSMOS DESIGNS HAS OTHER UNFINISHED PROJECTS, INCLUDING SHOOT-'EM-UP BORN IN SPACE. --->



<!--- [C64] THE BRILLIANT OUTRAGE BITMAP CREATED BY STE DAY. --->

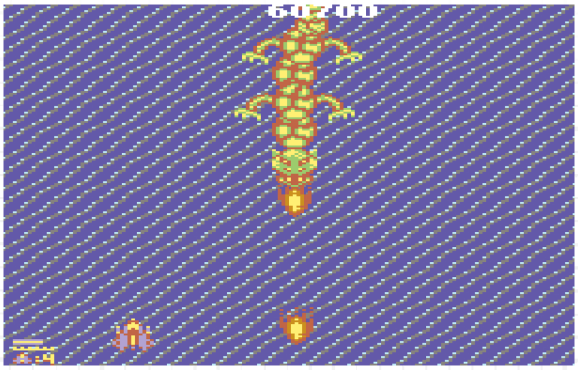
DATA BURST

ZETA WING

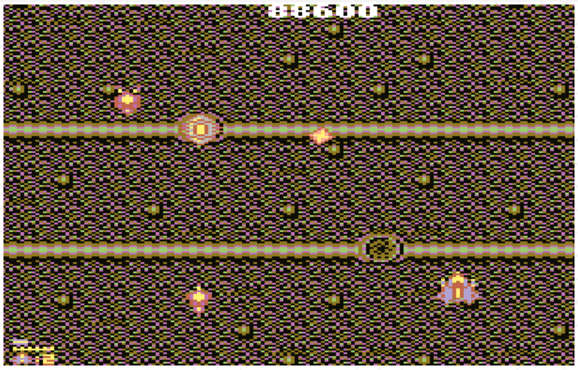
<INFO BY: WITCHSOFT (SARAH JANE AVORY, PAOLO RATHJEN) AND BITMAP SOFT FORMAT: C64 CARTRIDGE PRICE: £35 PLUS POSTAGE (CARTRIDGE), $3.99 OR MORE (DIGITAL) VISIT: BIT.LY/ZETA64 (CARTRIDGE) / SARAHJANEAVORY.ITCH.IO/ZETA-WING (DIGITAL) />

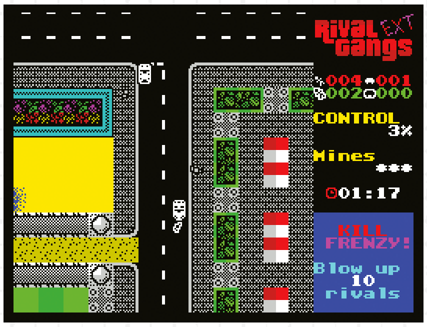
<BODY> **After the amazing horizontally scrolling *Soul Force,* Sarah Jane Avory used her experience converting *Gemini Wing* to the Amiga to create this superb vertical follow-up.** Mutant creatures are attacking Earth and so you step into your spaceship to defeat them across seven hectic stages. Shooting a complete enemy wave drops a P icon to increase your Power bar; fill it and your weapon strength goes up a level. Die, and it drops back one level. Waiting at the end of each stage is a suitably imposing boss to defeat. The options menu is excellent and the superb graphics and music really fit the bill, while parallax scrolling gives a real feeling of depth to the backgrounds. The three difficulty settings all have a well-tempered difficulty curve as you progress through the levels, with more features and enemies added as you progress. Bitmap Soft have put together an impressive physical release, with the cartridge nestling in a well-made box and a glossy manual. Best of all, a secret code unlocks Sarah's earlier vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up *Neutron* (a homage to the classic *Star Force* and previously only available digitally). The initial batch has sold out, so sign up for a stock alert or try the digital download (with *Neutron* available digitally separately) – this is well worth buying if you likes shmups. </BODY>

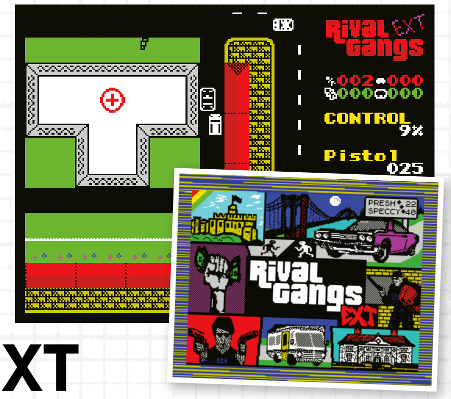
SCORE: 90%



<!--- [C64] TAKING ON THE SECOND BOSS, BE SURE TO DODGE ITS FIERY BREATH. --->




Rival EXT Gangs
004 001
002 000
CONTROL 3%
Mines ***
01:17
KILL FRENZY!
Blow up 10 rivals

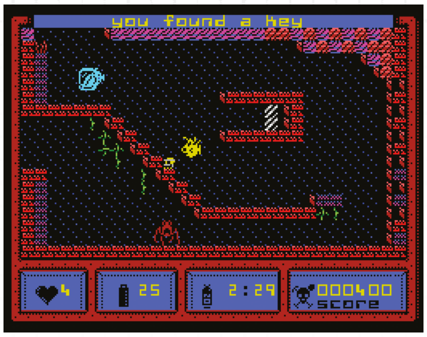

Rival EXT Gangs
002 000
000 000
CONTROL 9%
Pistol 025
Rival Gangs EXT
PRESH + 22 SPECCY 48

RIVAL GANGS EXT

<INFO BY: ZXPRESH (LOADING SCREEN DAVEY SLOAN) FORMAT:ZX SPECTRUM (128K NEEDED)
PRICE: $3.50 OR MORE (FREE DEMO AVAILABLE) VISIT: ZXPRESH.ITCH.IO/RIVAL-GANGS-EXT />

<BODY> **Choose to be part of rival gangs the Chameleons or the Darksiders as they battle to take over the city, in this game inspired by the original overhead *Grand Theft Auto*.** Originally entered into the ZX Dev 2021 competition, this extended version adds a loading screen, 20 missions, new weapons, and Kill Frenzies. Get injured and sent to the hospital and your gang will lose control of part of the city; at 0% it is game over. Steal cars and complete missions to unlock rewards, trying to reach one of multiple endings. The new additions are a lot of fun, especially the Kill Frenzies, but getting used to the controls (with multiple keys needed) and identifying enemies will take some time. You should certainly persevere with it, though. </BODY>

SCORE: **77%**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25
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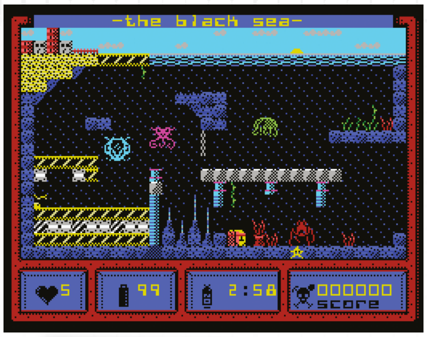
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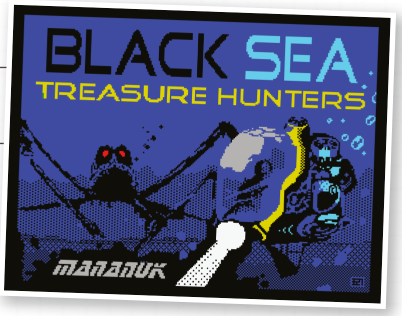
2:58
000000 score

BLACK SEA


BLACK SEA
TREASURE HUNTERS
MANANUK

<INFO BY: MANANUK FORMAT:MSX
PRICE: NAME YOUR OWN PRICE DOWNLOAD
VISIT: MANANUK.ITCH.IO/BLACK-SEA-MSX />

<BODY> **Previously entered into the ZX Dev 2021 competition and available on Amstrad, this new conversion is thanks to Jonathan Cauldwell's multi-platform Arcade Game Designer.** Captain Robinson descends into the Black Sea in a bathysphere, looking to collect valuable treasure. The limited oxygen supply can be topped up and other objects found can aid exploration. Contact with underwater creatures drains oxygen while mines are fatal on contact. This is a well-made flick-screen title with a high degree of difficulty; nothing startlingly original but worth a try. </BODY>

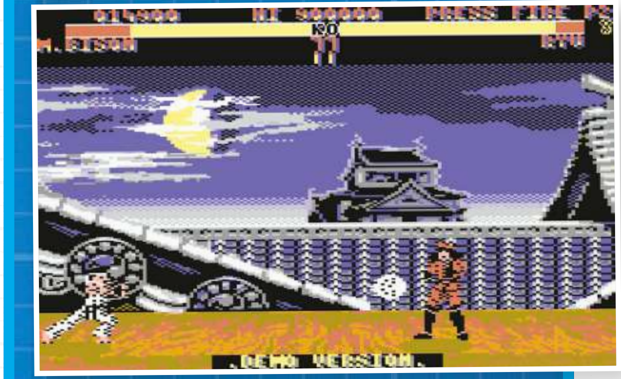
SCORE: **73%**

PROCESSING

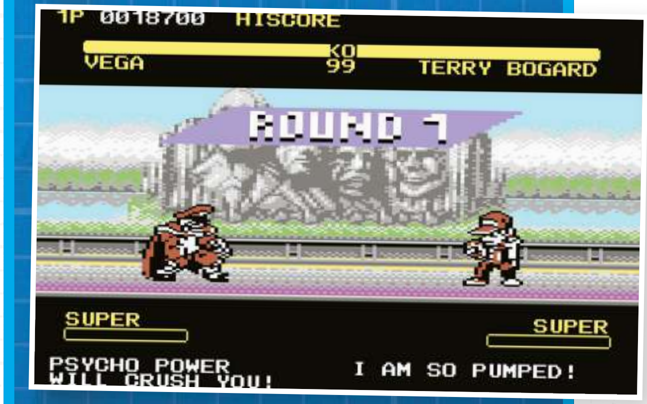
<INTRO> A BATTLE BETWEEN TWO BEAT-'EM-UPS IS HEADING TO THE C64 THIS YEAR. FIGHT! </INTRO>

<BODY> **"*Street Fighter II* is one of my favourite games, but I was very disappointed when I played the official conversion," Paco explains to us.** "I thought, 'I'm going to make a new *SFII* for the C64 as a learning exercise.' I know it sounds crazy!" *SF II Champion Edition*'s demo is a cartridge file, with music by Norcisound and bitmaps by Errazking. "I've done the sprites: every character is up to four sprites, no multiplexing, and this way the game runs fast at 50fps." Paco hopes to release in summer 2022. More info at bit.ly/sf2cedemo

Meanwhile, RetroGL has developed his Retro Fighter engine. "I began to develop an engine for PC which reproduced *Street Fighter II* gameplay with sprites suitable for C64. I have chosen the *SNK Vs Capcom: The Match Of The Millennium* graphic. Then I started converting graphics and code to C64." *SNK Vs Capcom* has backgrounds by artist JonEgg – "he's professional, flexible and brave: he took the job to fit any background into only 192 tiles!" This rival game is due August 2022. Watch a video at bit.ly/snkc64 </BODY>


KO
PRESS FIRE
M.BISON
RYU
DEMO VERSION

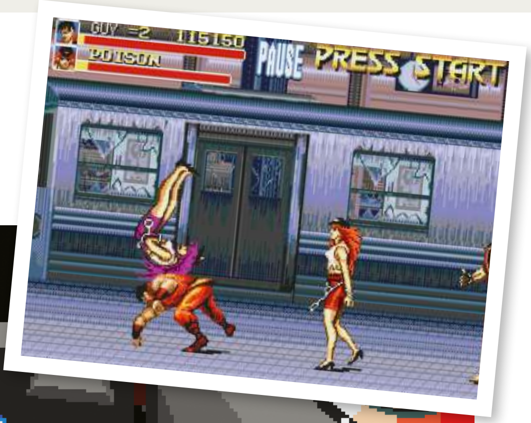
<!--- [C64] M BISON FACES A RYU FIREBALL IN SFII CHAMPION EDITION. --->


1P 0018700 HISCORE
VEGA
KO 99
TERRY BOGARD
ROUND 1
SUPER
SUPER
PSYCHO POWER WILL CRUSH YOU!
I AM SO PUMPED!

<!--- [C64] VEGA AND TERRY BOGARD TAUNT EACH OTHER BEFORE THEIR SNK VS CAPCOM BOUT. --->

HOT TOPIC

RETROBATES MULL OVER THE SCENE'S MOST INTRIGUING ISSUES



» [Mega-CD] All the team have fond memories of *Final Fight CD*, so we're hoping it reaches the Mega Drive Mini 2.

MEGA-CD MEMORIES

The team revisit Sega's attempt to embrace CD-ROM technology

DARRAN JONES

NICK THORPE

ANDY SALTER

Seeing that the just-announced Mega Drive Mini 2 will feature Mega-CD games, the team has decided to share their memories of the divisive piece of hardware. Tim never owned one when he was younger, so Darran and Nick have been joined by Andy, who did have one back in the day. Let's begin.

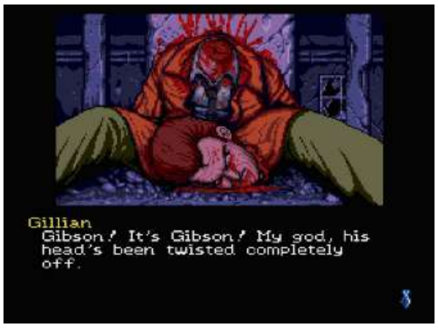
DARRAN
So what's your first memory of the original Mega-CD?

NICK
My dad got a promotional video for it, filled with footage of games like *Night Trap*, *Sewer Shark* and *Batman Returns*. There was a weird clay-animation bit too. I'd watch it over and over, but didn't actually get to play the system until years later.

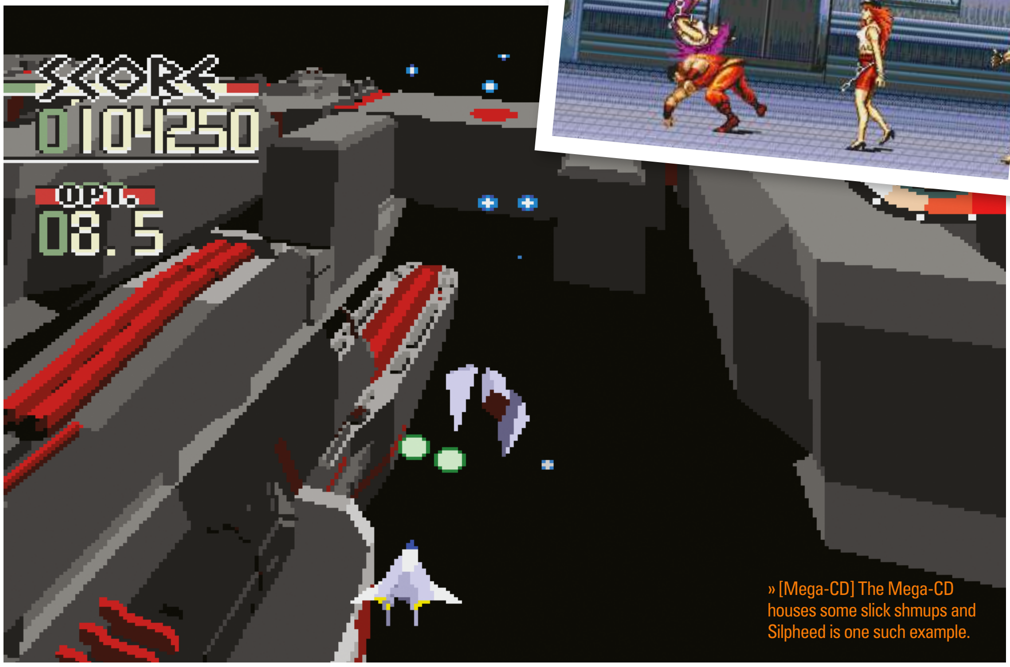
ANDY
For me it's the anime-style intros and cutscenes from games like *Vay*, *Lunar: The Silver Star* and *Sol-Feace*.

DARRAN
You've mentioned the Mega-CD a few times in the past, which has always stuck with me as you love the PC. How did you end up getting one, Andy?

» [Mega-CD] While the inclusion of *Snatcher* feels too gory, Nick reminded us that it did appear on the PC Engine Mini.



Gillian
Gibson! It's Gibson! My god, his head's been twisted completely off.



» [Mega-CD] The Mega-CD houses some slick shmups and Silpheed is one such example.

ANDY
To be fair, I had consoles long before I got a PC. I think my brother and I got one for Christmas the year it came out in the UK.

DARRAN
I got mine second-hand around 1994. I got it with *Sonic-CD*, *Batman Returns*, *Road Avenger* and a few others, but I didn't keep it for long. When did you buy yours, Nick?

NICK
I picked up my Mega-CD 2 at Cash Converters in 2003. It has still got the price sticker on it – £14.99! You'd never get it at that price now.

ANDY
Did they think it was a normal CD player or something?

NICK
I don't think so, it just wasn't something people were interested in at the time. All the games were shoved haphazardly in a tub under the shelves, half of them with broken cases and missing manuals.

> "I gave up my 'stake' in the Mega-CD to buy Bubblegum Crisis on VHS"
>
> ANDY SALTER

DARRAN
I'm pretty sure that the copy of *Dracula Unleashed* I gave you was from a Cash Converters as well. Didn't you own *Snatcher*, Andy? That goes for silly money now. What else did you have?

ANDY
Yes, I got sent a free copy from Konami to review for my anime fanzine many years ago. We also had *Thunderhawk*, *Final Fight CD* and Shining Force CD. Like you our collection also included classics like *Sonic CD* and *Road Avenger*.

DARRAN
Holy crap Andy, that's some money right there. Tell me you still have it all in your loft. And if it's still in your loft, tell me where you live!

ANDY
If only. I gave up my 'stake' in the Mega-CD to buy *Bubblegum Crisis* on VHS.

DARRAN
Is that a good deal? I actually ended up buying a second Mega-CD and bought all the

16-BIT
MEGA DRIVE SEGA
MEGA-CD
SEGA

games I wanted like the shmups and *Final Fight CD* and then I ended up selling it all, because of course I did. You must be quite pleased you kept yours, Nick?

NICK
Oh yeah, definitely. My best find was back in 2008, I'd been for a hospital appointment and needed something to pick me up. I found *The Terminator*, *Night Trap*, *Time Gal*, *Soulstar*, *Battlecorps*, *Mickey Mania* and *BC Racers* for £28 total. One of them even had the infamous *Keio Flying Squadron* demo in the back. *The Terminator* alone is worth about four times that these days.

DARRAN
Very impressive. Surely the Mega-CD is your favourite console due to all the FMV games on it? You must have one of those *Make My Videos* games, right?

NICK
I wish I did. I remember seeing it on that promo video and wondering how you'd win or lose. I do love a bit of FMV though, I even have the 32X CD version of *Night Trap*.

DARRAN
So Andy, it sounds like you had a lot of RPGs on your Mega-CD. Why do you think they worked so well on the system?

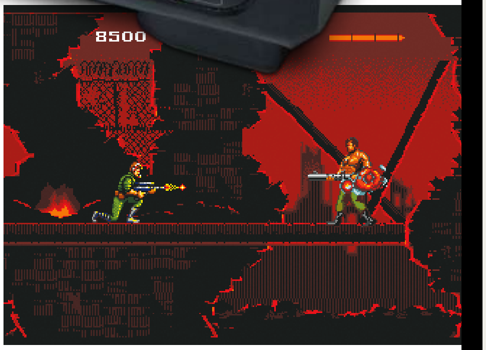
ANDY
Lunar was probably my favourite game. Having those anime-style cutscenes and music really added to the experience, and it was something I'd not seen before, especially on the SNES which always had a reputation for great JRPGs.

DARRAN
Yeah, I'd argue the music and cutscenes definitely enhanced many games. The downside, of course, was that was normally all you'd get over the Mega Drive original, which felt a little naughty. So with regards to the Mega Drive Mini 2, what three Mega-CD games would you love to see included?

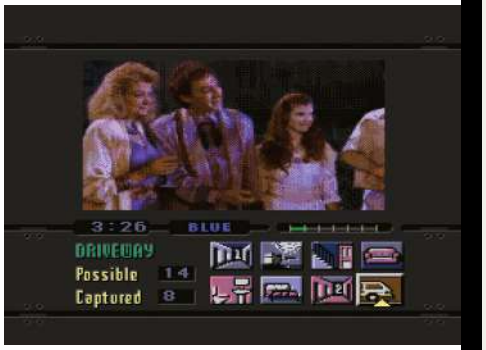
NICK
The big ones I'm never going to get original copies of are *Snatcher* and *Lunar*, so I'd really like to see those. I also want *Eternal Champions: Challenge From The Dark Side*, since it'd be easy for Sega to include and it's so much better than the cartridge version.

ANDY
Like Nick, *Lunar* and *Snatcher* is a must, along with *Final Fight CD* and *Thunderhawk*.

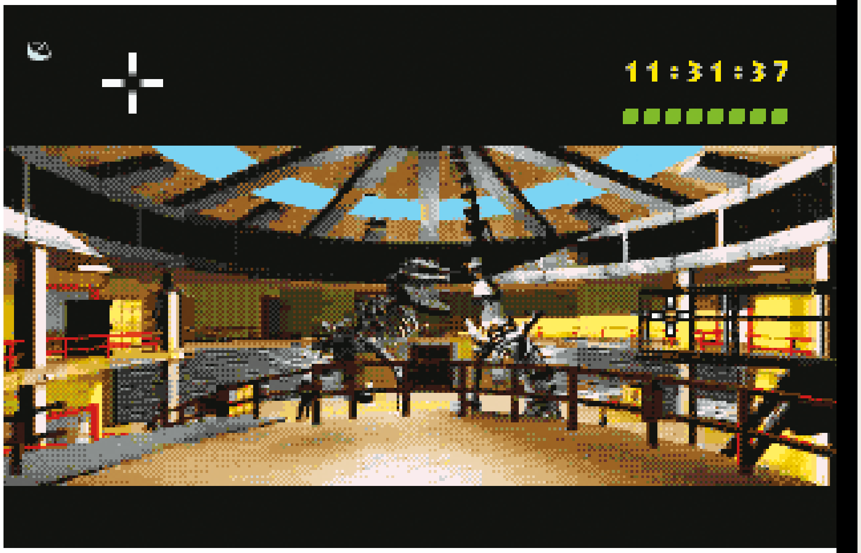
DARRAN
My list has *Jurassic Park*, *Snatcher* and *Keio Flying Squadron*, because I can't justify the prices the latter two sell for now. One thing's for sure. I won't sell my Mega Drive Mini 2. Or will I? *



» [Mega-CD] *The Terminator* sells for over £120 now, making Nick's bundle purchase something of a bargain.



» [Mega-CD] Nick has countless versions of *Night Trap*, but he's still hoping it appears on the Mega Drive Mini 2.



» [[Mega-CD] Licensing means *Jurassic Park* will most likely remain on the Mega-CD, but Darran remains optimistic.

MEGA DRIVE MINI 2 REQUESTS

Readers reveal the Mega-CD games they'd love to play

James Harvey
Batman Returns, just for the 3D racing levels!

Murray Lane
Snatcher, more people need the chance to try this amazing game!

Shining Galoot
ALL THE SHINING! Really happy that *Shining Force CD* is getting some attention!

GageExperience
The *Lunar* games would be a good showcase, try and cover games that aren't in other collections already.

Steven Hall
Thunderhawk! I can remember being blown away by this when I got my Mega-CD!

fluffy bunny
Wait, there's a mini Mega-CD on the way?! Ooh, one step closer to that mini Saturn…

Simon Dueck
Snatcher, because Kojima's early magnum opus needs to shine again.

Lee
I'd love to see *Mortal Kombat CD* on the Mega Drive Mini 2. It's widely regarded as the best *MK1* port from the fourth generation of consoles.

Ben Wilson
I imagine a lot of people will vote for *Snatcher*, and I'm definitely one of them.

David Sheppard
BC Racers as it was one of my favourite multiplayer racers at the time. They might have to change the whole Gary Gritta reference though…

Llama King
Road Avenger. I was blown away when first playing it. It really did feel like I was controlling a cartoon.

Forbes Longden
I'm hoping *The Adventures Of Willy Beamish* finally comes to PAL land!

Yaksha
My 14-year-old me says *Night Trap*, but at 44, I'd say *Final Fight CD*.

genesisdoes
Sewer Shark! The FMV stuff was just so different and felt like the future at the time. Superior to the original with added stages.

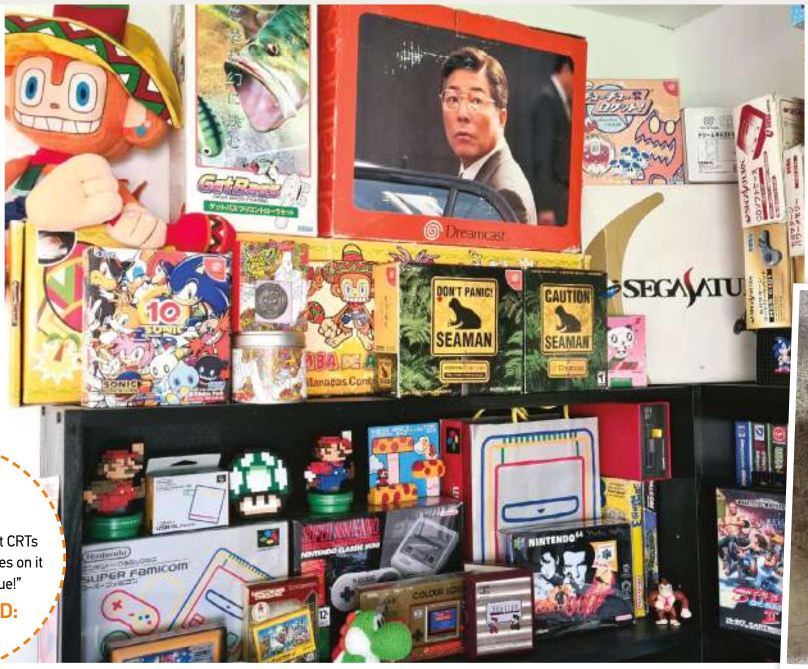
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH **THE RETRO KEYHOLE**

B&O MX8000 TV

"This is one of the best CRTs available. Playing games on it is a dream come true!"

AMOUNT PAID: £100



THIS IS COOL SATURN

"I love the Sega Saturn and this is by far my favourite of all the editions."

AMOUNT PAID: £230

THE NOSTALGIA KING

Darren Browne collects games that have long stuck in his mind

BIO

NAME:
Darren Browne

LOCATION:
Hertfordshire, England

FAVOURITE GAME:
Super Mario World

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
Mega Drive

COLLECTION WORTH:
Probably around £8,000

INSTAGRAM:
@kingmonkey25

The motivation to collect games and systems is as wide and varied as the items themselves. Some collectors focus their attention on rare items, while others collect entire sets or tend to focus on specific franchises.

For Darren Browne, known online as King Monkey, the desire to collect is simply driven by his own nostalgia and curiosity. "My collection isn't focussed towards any particular era," he tells us. "It's more of a time capsule from my youth when I played a lot more games than I ever seem to manage these days."

Darren began collecting retro games in 2009 but he had to sell his many items a couple of years later when he moved to London and found he had a lack of space. When he left the capital in 2016, he began collecting again. "I started this collection with the intention of picking up games and consoles I owned back in the day as well as ones I always wanted to experience but never did."

The goodies include his first-ever computer (a ZX Spectrum) as well as his first console (a Master System). "I also have items I could only dream of at the time such as the PC Engine briefcase," he says. "The majority of the collection is made up of games from the 16-bit era with around 100 Super Famicom titles and 200 Japanese Mega Drive games, mainly because this era was where my love of gaming truly took off."

Like our own editor, Darren tends to favour Japanese versions because he was fascinated by the import scene when he was a kid. "I made a conscious decision that the collection would consist of the Japanese consoles and games that I had always wanted," he explains. "I love how different the Japanese games are compared to Western releases with incredible box art designs and full-colour manuals. I've also recently started picking up a few Sega Genesis titles due to preferring the box art over the European versions."

Rather than pursue complete collections, Darren says he prefers a curated selection of games and systems that he has a genuine interest in playing. He's also willing to wait for items at the right price rather than buy on impulse.

"My collection is unique insofar as everything was chosen out of either nostalgia or curiosity so it's just fun to look around at the various shelves," he says. "The highlight of the collection is my signed copy of *Streets Of Rage 2*. It's a game I have great memories of, having bought it on release day. In 2018, I was lucky enough to see Yuzo Koshiro and Motohiro Kawashima play the *Streets Of Rage* soundtracks live and before the show I got to meet Koshiro-san who kindly signed it for me."

Since Darren is currently renting, his games room isn't a permanent fixture. It's also smaller than in his previous property so parts of the collection are in storage. "I'm looking forward to having a permanent games room in about 18 months with everything on display," he says. It sounds like it will be well worth the wait. *

MCWILL-MODDED GAME GEAR

"The LCD screen mod breathes new life into the system!"

AMOUNT PAID: AROUND £150

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

INTERFACE UNIT
CD-ROM²
PC Engine

PC ENGINE BRIEFCASE

"This was the stuff of legend back in the day so it's great to own something I considered a Holy Grail item as a kid!"

AMOUNT PAID: AROUND £160

BUBBLE BOBBLE
PAC-MAN

MEGA DRIVE
Yuzo Koshiro
STREETS OF RAGE II
16-BIT CARTRIDGE
SEGA

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

STREETS OF RAGE 2 (SIGNED BY YUZO KOSHIRO)

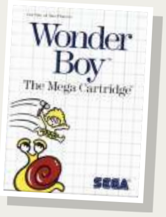
- "This copy has been signed by [music composer] Yuzo Koshiro. It's a treasured memory of an awesome night!"

PAID: £20

BARGAIN HUNT

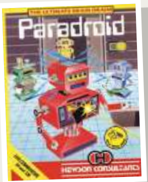
Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR


Wonder Boy
The Mega Cartridge
SEGA

WONDER BOY

The highly-rated Master System port of the original *Wonder Boy* will only set you back around **£25** and that's for a complete boxed version including instructions. Triple that cost for the Japanese *Super Wonder Boy*.



PARADROID

If you see a copy of *Paradroid* on the Commodore 64, you could end up paying **£25** for the pleasure of this Hewson classic. The *Uridium+/Paradroid* compilation is rare and can sell for more than four times that!

Wii
GEOMETRY WARS
GALAXIES

GEOMETRY WARS: GALAXIES

There appears to have been a boom in Wii collections of late but prices are still at bargain levels. You shouldn't have to pay much more than **£3** for this superb multi-directional shooter.

TOTAL ECLIPSE

TOTAL ECLIPSE

If you want to slowly venture around the world of *Total Eclipse*, you may need to be fast: CPC copies don't appear that often. But you'll only pay about **£4.**

KICK OFF 2
ANCO

KICK OFF 2

This game is available on The A500 Mini but, if you want to find an original copy with all of the expansions, you should be able to net a copy for about **£20.**

DUAL SHOCK CONTROLLER

Looking at getting your thumbs on an original PlayStation Dual Shock? You may be able to find a brand-new one for **£70** or a boxed used version for about **£20** with yellowed pads going for a lot less.

SWIV

Anyone wanting to blast away with this vertically scrolling shmup will find themselves shelling out **£20** for a boxed Amiga copy in good condition. The SNES release is far pricier.

HOW MUCH?!

DONKEY KONG LAND III

Nintendo
GAME BOY
DONKEY KONG LAND III
Nintendo
G

If you want a boxed copy of the original *Donkey Kong Land*, you could pay about **£40.** But while *Donkey Kong Land III* tends to go for less than that, a new, sealed copy recently sold for **£499** on eBay.

Prices correct at time of print

MY RETRO LIFE

PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT OUR **SHARED PASSION**

MAME SCROLLING

Paul Drury explores the outer limits

I can recall the exact moment I realised I was living in the future. My friend Matt placed the Ouya console onto my outstretched palm and said with a smile, "You're holding every arcade game ever made in your hand there." I stared at the magic cube in hushed awe. I thought of the endless aisles of arcade cabinets I'd walked along during my childhood in the Seventies and Eighties and imagined them as tiny corridors inside the Ouya which now I could waltz along forever, without the need for an infinite supply of ten pence pieces. And it was all thanks to MAME.

This would be 2014 and of course MAME (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator) had been around since the mid-Nineties, its open-source philosophy meaning a community of dedicated enthusiasts had steadily improved its capabilities and increased the number of games it supported over the years. Yes, I was a late adopter but since then, I have acquired two MAME cabs, one tabletop, one full size, both crafted by my friend Craig, to make the experience feel even closer to that of my youth. I spend many an evening just scrolling down the vast list of titles, smiling at those I recognise and always staggered by the thousands I don't, but can now discover.

I'm sure any Spectrum addict or Commodore fan has felt the same when perusing the huge archives of such sites as World Of Spectrum or Lemon64 but the thing that never fails to impress me is these games existed as physical machines. Hulking monsters of wood and metal, with soldered circuit boards, moulded control panels, illuminated marquees and lavish cabinet art. They were manufactured on production lines, assembled by workers, shipped out by drivers, wheeled into arcades by operators and then drooled over by players like me. These games weren't just coded – they were built.

Considering the effort and expense it took to bring them into existence, it seems even more remarkable that someone, somewhere, gave the nod to such oddities as *Noah's Ark*, requiring you to throw pairs of animals into what looks like a hastily constructed IKEA shed, or the scatological *Uncle Poo*. There is much fun to be had picking what to play next based on how daft the name is and then wondering who thought *Streaking* would make a suitable subject for a coin-op.

Amongst the bonkers and the generic – you will never run out of scrolling shooters to blast through, for example – you will stumble across some real gems. Recently, I've loved *Mustache Boy*, a mix of *Make Trax*, *Bomberman* and *Up 'N' Down*, and *Agent Super Bond*, a really ambitious arcade adventure from 1982, in the days before anyone took licensing issues very seriously.

Then there are the obscure games created by people behind some big hits. I urge you to try *The Adventures Of Robby Roto* by Jamie Fenton of *GORF* fame and *KLAX* coder Mark Pierce's *Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters*, which was perhaps too complicated for Eighties arcade-goers but perfect when you have infinite credits.

> "I'm always staggered by the thousands of games I've never heard of but can now discover"
>
> **PAUL DRURY**

If you like your history, of course MAME is great for tracing the roots of gaming genres and features. Listen to the first use of speech while seeing off alien invaders in *Stratovox* and enter your initials on *Star Fire*, the first arcade game to display a high-score table. And why not take a trip back to 1984 with *Kamikaze Cabbie*, released by Data East well before Sega recognised the fun of terrifying passengers in the wonderful *Crazy Taxi*.

MAME is also the repository for games you definitely didn't play in the arcade because they were never officially released. You'll find some great prototypes, from Tim Skelly's '*Robotron* with jazz hands' *Screw Loose* to *Bradley Trainer*, Ed Rotberg's update of *Battlezone* done for the American military to train their gunners on. You'll also find plenty of 'what were they thinking?' titles – try Atari's *Beat Head* and you'll see what I mean.

So next time you're having a MAME session, of course scroll to your favourites. There is a reason why we all remember *Defender* and *Galaga* – they are brilliant. But then let yourself scroll on, to something you've never heard of, or one you've seen mentioned in the pages of **Retro Gamer** but never played or just something with a name that makes you smile. Oooh, *Funky Fish*. Let's dive in here… *

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW (TO ME)

DINGO

Smile at what the Stamper Brothers did before the Spectrum. Also see the excellent *Blue Print*.

FIELD DAY

Taito's take on *Track & Field*, featuring three-legged races, tug-of-war and Chun Li-style thighs.

LEVERS

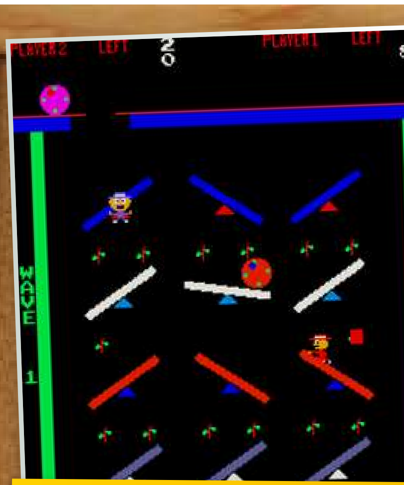
I love Rock-Ola's early Eighties stuff – *Jump Bug*, *Eyes* and this tricky and wildly original puzzler.

PU*LI*RU*LA

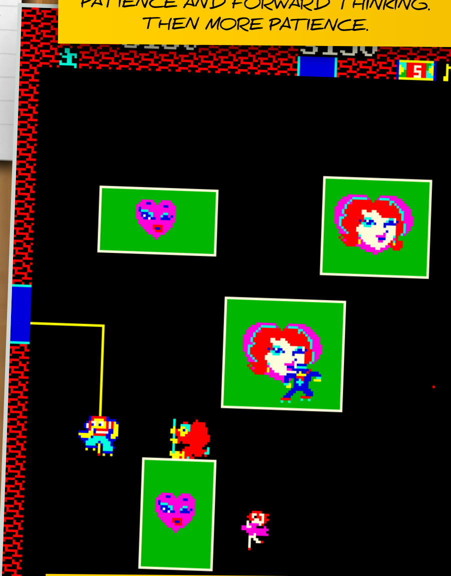
A beautiful and bonkers scrolling beat-'em-up from 1991. Taito was so much more than *Space Invaders*.

QWAK

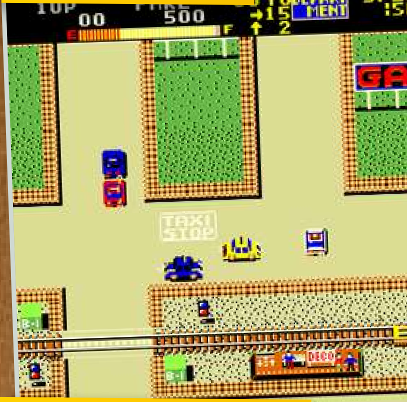
There are many great prototypes to discover, like this clever slide puzzler by Mark '*Marble Madness*' Cerny.



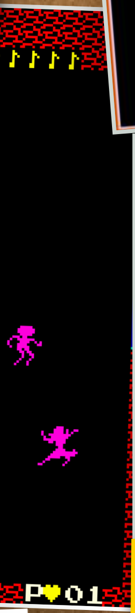
[ARCADE] LEVERS REQUIRES PATIENCE AND FORWARD THINKING. THEN MORE PATIENCE.

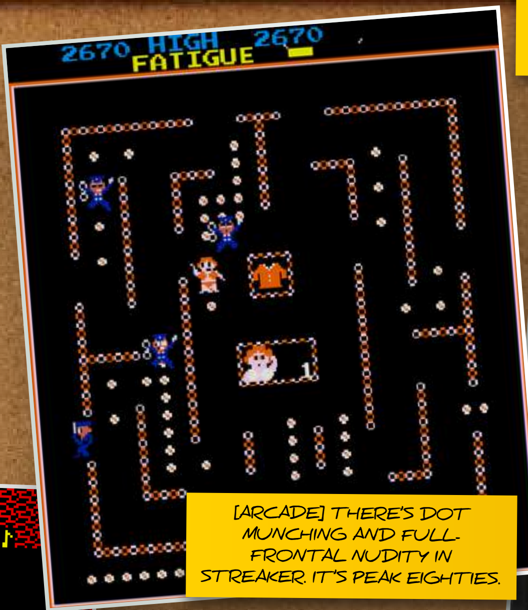


[ARCADE] GET YOUR QIX IN STUDIO 54 WITH DISCO NO 1.



[ARCADE] KAMIKAZE CABBIE IS THE GRANDAD OF SEGA'S CRAZY TAXI.

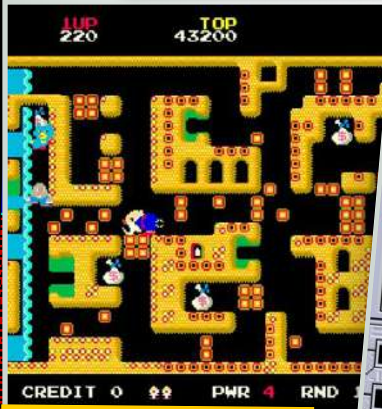




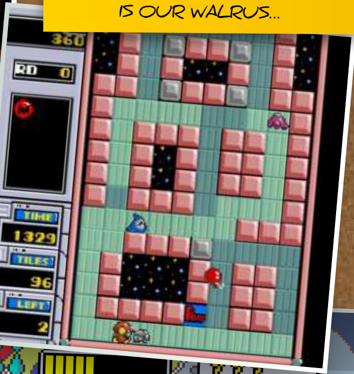
[ARCADE] THERE'S DOT MUNCHING AND FULL-FRONTAL NUDITY IN STREAKER. IT'S PEAK EIGHTIES.

SPACE INVADERS
P1
P2

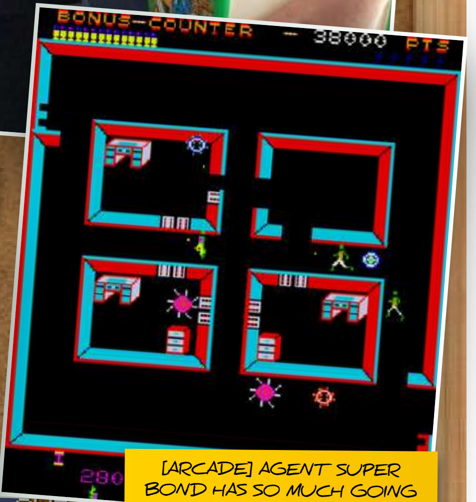
BIG BOY, LITTLE BOY, FAT BOY. ME AND MY MAME CABS. BOTH MACHINES WERE HAND BUILT BY CRAIG.



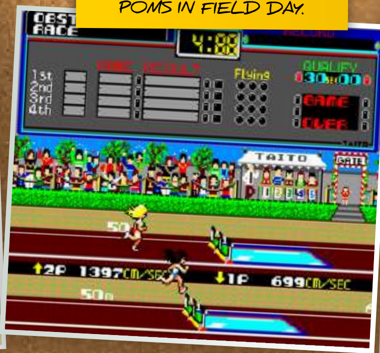
[ARCADE] THANKS TO READER JOHN TURNER FOR INTRODUCING US TO UNCLE POO.



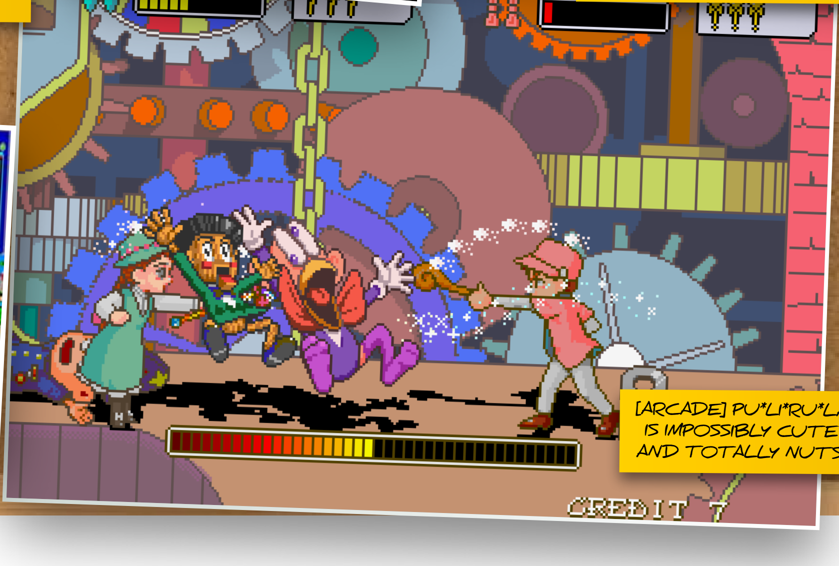
[ARCADE] MUSTACHE BOY. IT IS OUR WALRUS...



[ARCADE] AGENT SUPER BOND HAS SO MUCH GOING ON FOR SUCH AN EARLY ARCADE TITLE.



[ARCADE] BUTTON MASHING WITH POM POMS IN FIELD DAY.



[ARCADE] PU*LI*RU*LA IS IMPOSSIBLY CUTE AND TOTALLY NUTS.

MAME HIDDEN GEMS

Readers reveal their own discoveries

Duck Avenger
I was sad when later in life I discovered there was a *Bucky O'Hare* arcade game. I loved the property but never saw a cabinet in my town.

Paul Darbyshire
Mooching through MAME is something I absolutely love. I found *Kaiser Knuckle* doing it and instantly wished it had been ported at the time.

Protocol Penguin
Capcom's *3 Wonders*, *Psycho-Nics Oscar* and *Mizubaku Daibouken Adventure*.

John Turner
Uncle Poo for the win every time.

Diamante Loco
Ninja Baseball Bat Man was the first really weird one I discovered on MAME years ago. I've since seen it in an arcade.

Ryan
Old-school vector games like *Battlezone* and *Star Wars* were before my time and they blew my mind when I first discovered them in the late-Nineties with emulation.

Sakura Hoshi
Duck Hunt. Yeah I know it was on the NES but I didn't know it was originally an arcade game AND that you could shoot the dog.

ThisIsMikeD
Pretty Solider Sailor Moon is probably my favourite discovery due to MAME.

J Is Manchild
Kot-Rybolov, a Russian one-on-one fighter with a bird versus a cat.

Mark Elliott
Namco's *Sky Kid* – a wonderful side-scrolling shooter that goes from right to left which is unusual to say the least!

Graham Plowman
The Outfoxies. Crazy game with some great scaling effects.

Alex Holmes
Scud Hammer. So outrageously Japanese. The only videogame to make me laugh out loud.

MAILBAG

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Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of either our NES/Master System or SNES/Mega Drive books

THE NES BOOK

STAR LETTER

IT'S THE JOYPAD!

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
It has recently struck me, after playing games for about 30 years, the reason I prefer one console over another. It's not primarily the graphics, sound, aesthetics of the system or even the manufacturer. I think it's down to the control pad.

Take the SNES versus the Mega Drive. I just prefer front-facing buttons to shoulder buttons, so the Mega Drive wins. It was the same with the Saturn and the PlayStation, I can't cope with two shoulder buttons let alone four, so prefer playing games on the Saturn. Even when a game is clearly superior on the PlayStation, like *Tomb Raider*, I'd much rather play it with the Saturn pad.

Is it just me? Do consoles live or die on their controller? What do you guys think?

Phil Richardson

That's an interesting question, Phil. We tend to play across all platforms and we're not sure that controller preference would be enough for us to pass up a clearly technically superior game, but it does still have a major impact on our purchasing decisions. This seems to happen most frequently with Nintendo consoles thanks to the odd nature of the N64, GameCube and Wii controllers, but we've definitely favoured the Xbox over the PS2 for racing games because of analogue triggers, and vice versa for fighting games due to the Dual Shock 2's superior d-pad.

VS BATTLE
16
ASTAROT

» [GameCube] Our brains melt when the best platform exclusive content is tied to the worst controller.

» [Wii] Conversions to the Wii often used ham-fisted motion-control gimmicks, but *Resident Evil 4* worked superbly.

FIX-IT FELIX

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I have just read Nick's repair segment in issue 233 and it brings back memories of cleaning a PS2 lens to get it to read blue CD-ROM discs. Or cleaning the dust out of a PS4 to stop it sounding like a rocket taking off for a moon mission.

The one I never managed to repair was an Amiga 1200 that started making squeaking and grinding sounds when disks were inserted, and never played a game again. My days of playing *Mortal Kombat II* on five disks were over – OK it was a pain, but worth it for the graphics, albeit with static backgrounds – and no more playing *Turrican*.

Steve Cole

We've been pleased to learn that so many readers are also performing their own repairs. Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever and it's sad when a beloved system finally reaches the end of the road, as your Amiga 1200 did. Nick hasn't had it happen recently, but about a decade ago he failed to repair a PS2 belonging to one of his friends, and she still resents *God Hand* for being the last game it ever played.

AUDIO INQUIRY

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
Would it be possible to feature soundtrack CDs with the magazine? I know that your sister magazine Linux Format has dropped cover DVDs. Could you do more features in the magazine about soundtracks?

Ian Learmonth

We've done a couple of music CDs in the past and they were extremely popular with readers, so we'd be open to doing another if the right opportunity came up. As for more features on soundtracks, we don't do them so often, but issue 230 included the feature Chiptune Concerto about how musicians are using old sound hardware. Readers, let us know if you'd also like to see more of them.

» [PS2] *God Hand* was just nearby – how was Nick to know the PS2 would die playing it?

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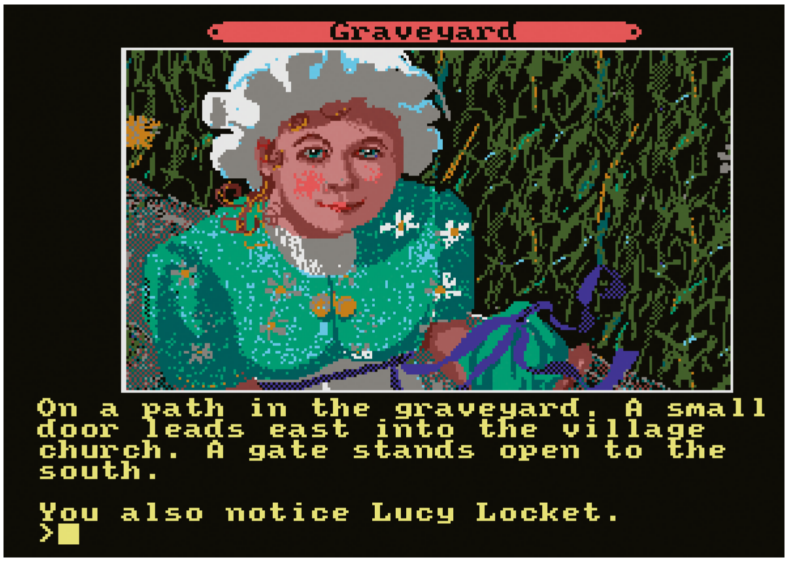

Graveyard

```
On a path in the graveyard. A small
door leads east into the village
church. A gate stands open to the
south.

You also notice Lucy Locket.
>
```

» [Atari ST] We couldn't track down the Amiga version, but it looks like this is Rob's missing game.

STUMPED NO MORE

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
In response to a letter published in your Mailbag section titled Feeling Stumped by Rob, I may be able to suggest a game that fits the description. It's a graphic adventure titled *The Adventures Of Shymer*, and we received it from a public domain library called Deja Vu, simply titled *Shymer*.

It is listed on MobyGames as a release for Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum. However, it wasn't uncommon for 8-bit titles to get ported as PD titles for 16-bit machines. I have also found it listed in several adverts in the December 1991 issue of *CU Amiga* magazine. Perhaps this is the title Rob seeks?

Jonathan Patterson

Several readers have suggested *Shymer* and Rob thinks it's correct. Many thanks everyone.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

PlayStation 5

Nick dropped the big bucks on some new hardware this month, only to confound everyone by picking up the critically panned *Balan Wonderworld* as his first game. Darran's considering one now too, because *The Last Of Us* is receiving a remake. Tim's happy with the Xbox and it doesn't play *Total War*, so Andy's out.

BACK TO THE PAST

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
Is it possible to buy old issues of **Retro Gamer**? Thanks in advance!

Daniel Norstrom

It is indeed – recent back issues of the physical magazine are available at magazinesdirect.com, and older ones are available on digital platforms. If you're looking for older physical copies, eBay and Facebook sales groups are your best bet.

Your say

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What are your favourite Wonder Boy memories?

Alistair Stewart
The first *Wonder Boy* was the first arcade game I got addicted to. It was just so fast and fluid. I couldn't believe it when I was able to pick up the *Hit Squad* C64 version later on and play at home.

Jon Greenham
Realising I played it first as *Adventure Island*.

Jean-Paul Bartolomei
Realising that the *Shantae* series is actually a clone of the *Monster World* games. Also playing the remake of *The Dragon's Trap* and seeing a classic made more beautiful than I remember.

Ewen Kirk
Wonder Boy was one of the first games I played on my Speccy after getting it free with my third copy of Your Sinclair, so it takes me to a place of utter nostalgia!

Binni Erlingsson
Seeing the original *Wonder Boy* at an arcade in 1986 when it came out. It felt very vibrant and colourful compared to the other games and when he jumped on a skateboard it blew my mind!

Michael Li
Wonder Boy In Monster Land (arcade): getting 65 gold from a single coin using the joystick wiggle glitch. One of the best games ever.

Elden Lord Olie
The feeling of adventure in *Wonder Boy III* was like nothing I'd ever experienced before in games, it just felt like being in a world. And *finally* figuring out how to get through the fire area was such a revelation, I think that moment in particular is my favourite.

Chris Pierce
Standing between the twin statues on the first level of *Wonder Boy In Monster World*. Pressing up and being transported in awe to the shrine in the clouds to meet your fairy protector. The music in that section is just sublime (as it is in the rest of the game).

retro GAMER

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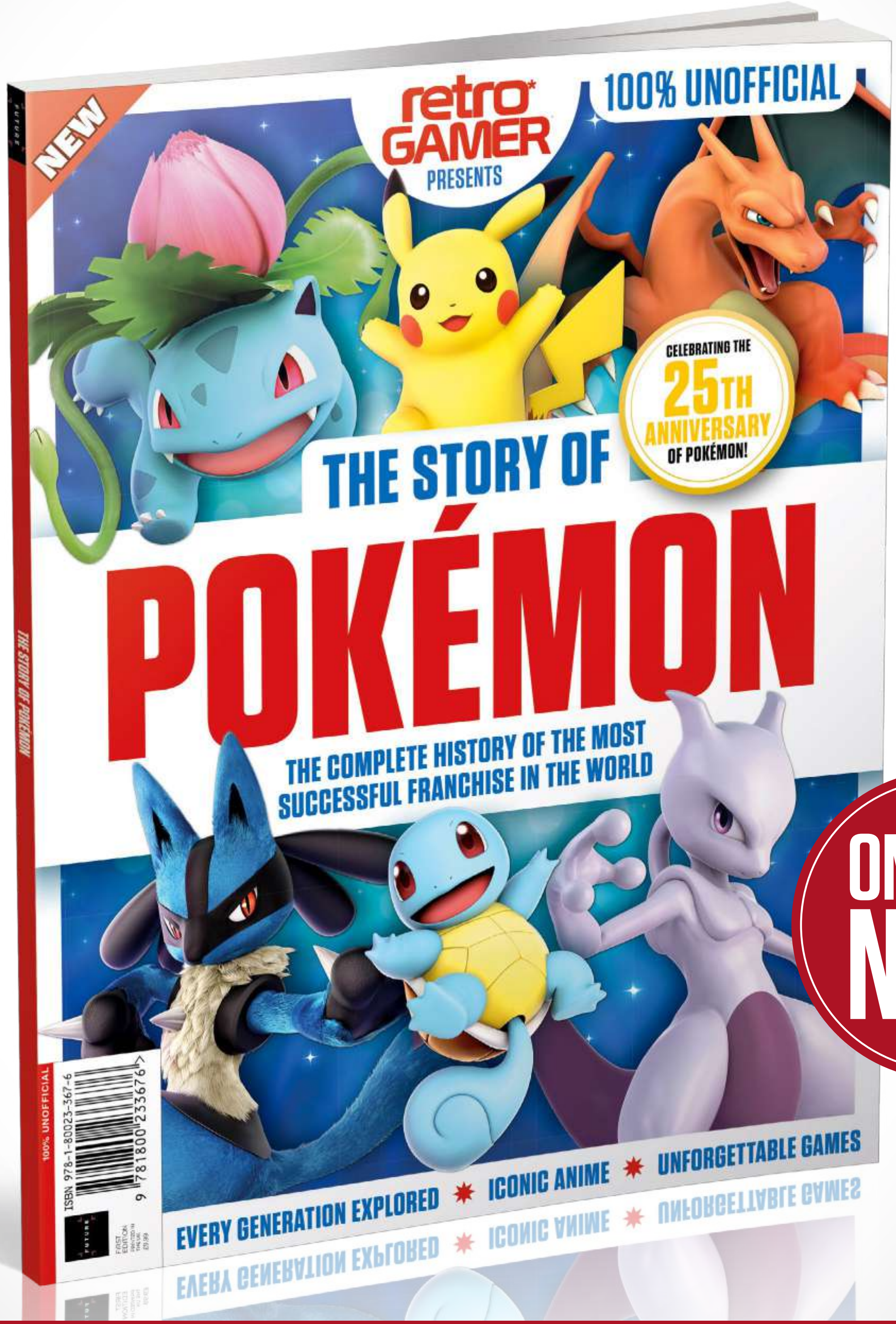
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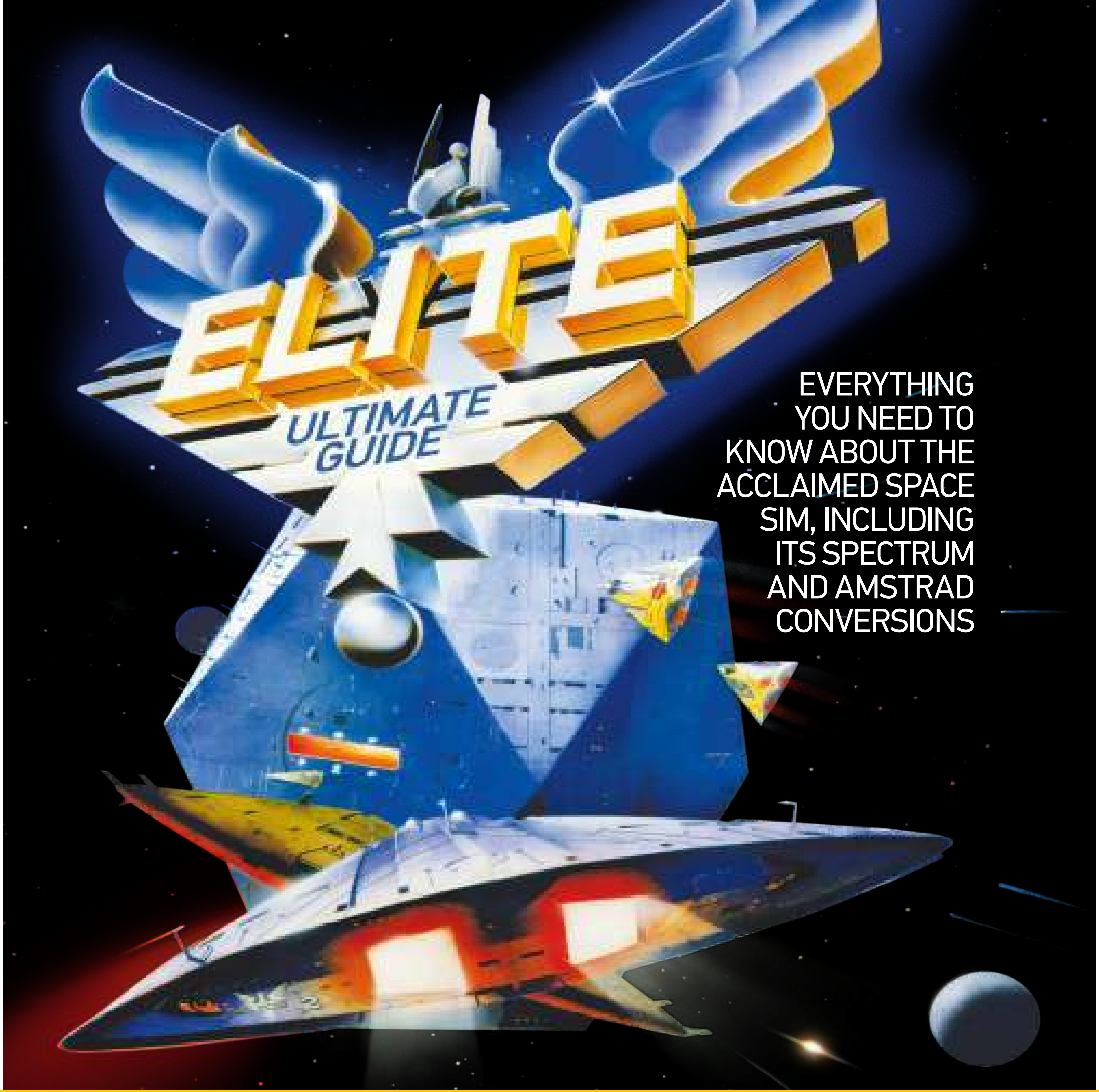

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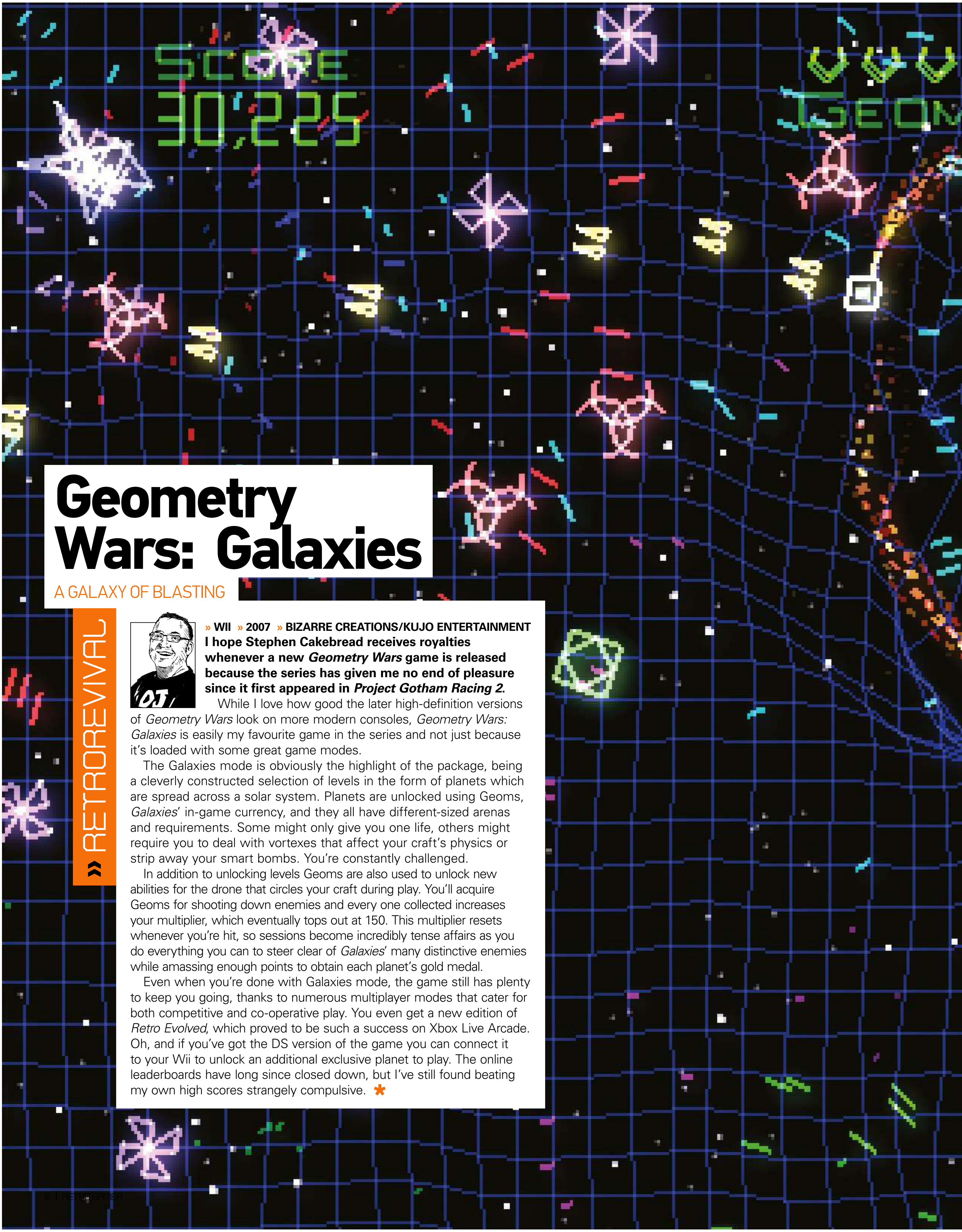

Geometry Wars: Galaxies

A GALAXY OF BLASTING

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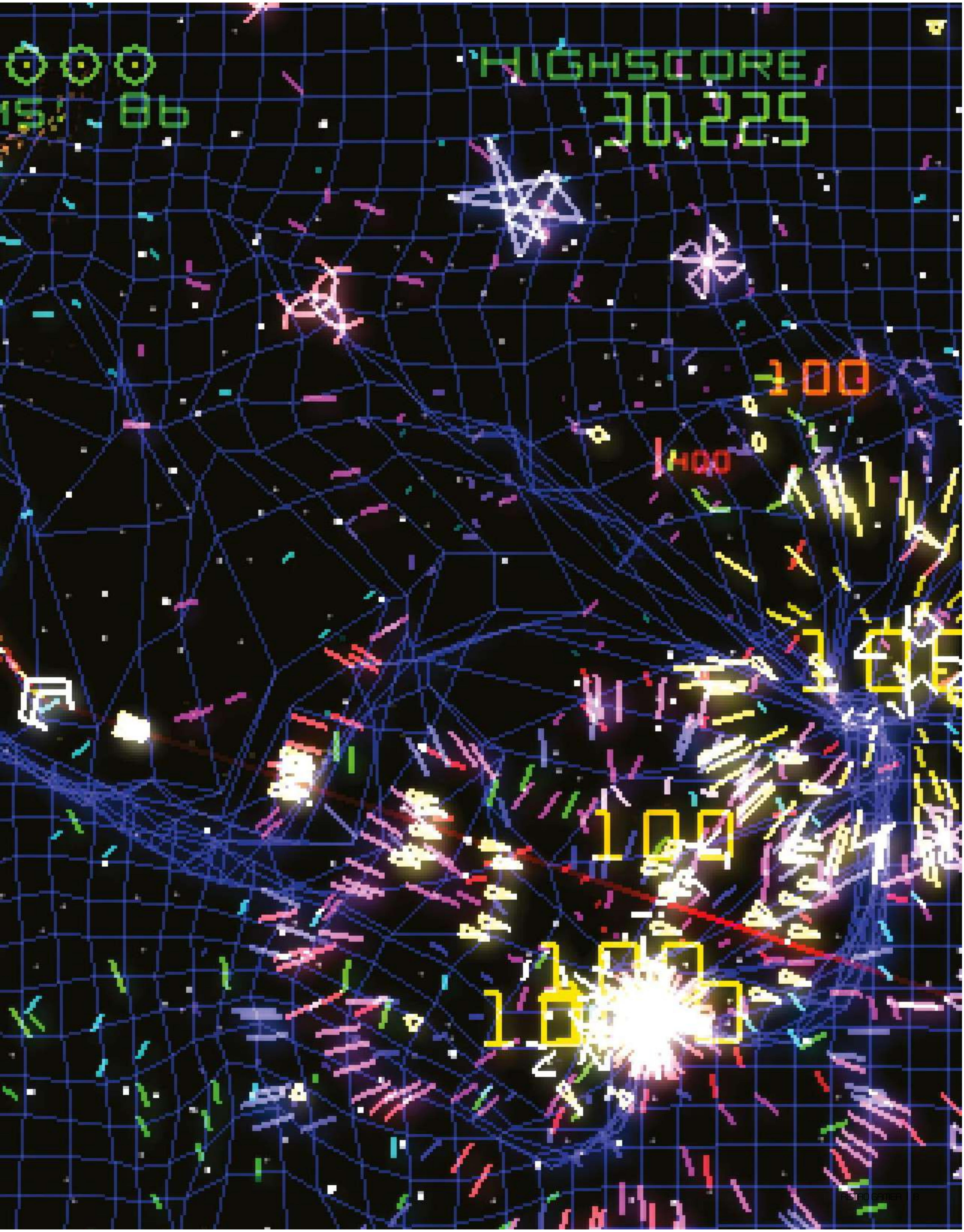
I hope Stephen Cakebread receives royalties whenever a new *Geometry Wars* game is released because the series has given me no end of pleasure since it first appeared in *Project Gotham Racing 2*.

While I love how good the later high-definition versions of *Geometry Wars* look on more modern consoles, *Geometry Wars: Galaxies* is easily my favourite game in the series and not just because it's loaded with some great game modes.

The Galaxies mode is obviously the highlight of the package, being a cleverly constructed selection of levels in the form of planets which are spread across a solar system. Planets are unlocked using Geoms, *Galaxies*' in-game currency, and they all have different-sized arenas and requirements. Some might only give you one life, others might require you to deal with vortexes that affect your craft's physics or strip away your smart bombs. You're constantly challenged.

In addition to unlocking levels Geoms are also used to unlock new abilities for the drone that circles your craft during play. You'll acquire Geoms for shooting down enemies and every one collected increases your multiplier, which eventually tops out at 150. This multiplier resets whenever you're hit, so sessions become incredibly tense affairs as you do everything you can to steer clear of *Galaxies*' many distinctive enemies while amassing enough points to obtain each planet's gold medal.

Even when you're done with Galaxies mode, the game still has plenty to keep you going, thanks to numerous multiplayer modes that cater for both competitive and co-operative play. You even get a new edition of *Retro Evolved*, which proved to be such a success on Xbox Live Arcade. Oh, and if you've got the DS version of the game you can connect it to your Wii to unlock an additional exclusive planet to play. The online leaderboards have long since closed down, but I've still found beating my own high scores strangely compulsive. *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100
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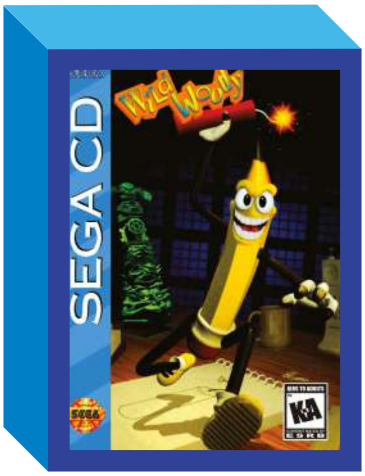
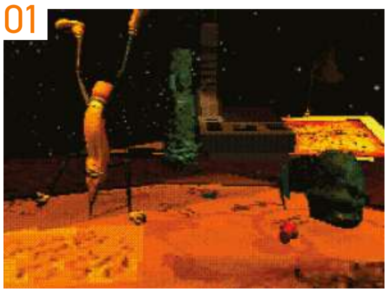
ENDGAME



WILD WOODY

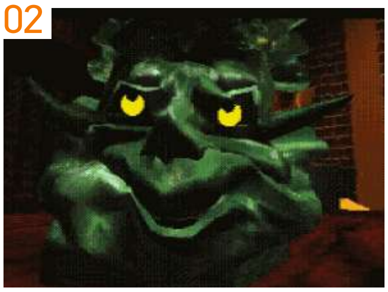
» With Sega recently announcing Mega-CD games for the incoming Mega Drive Mini 2, we've been discussing what sort of titles could end up appearing on the new system. One game we'd imagine will be left out of the final line-up of games is *Wild Woody*, a forgotten platformer by Sega Multimedia Studio that's very much of its time…

01



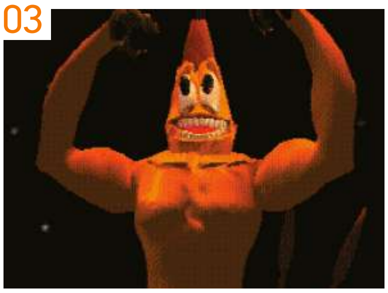
» After facing balls of energy and deadly zombies, Woody finally defeats the evil Monkey Flush, the final boss standing between him and victory. As you can see, Woody is quite happy, bouncing about like a toddler hopped up on Haribo sweets.

02



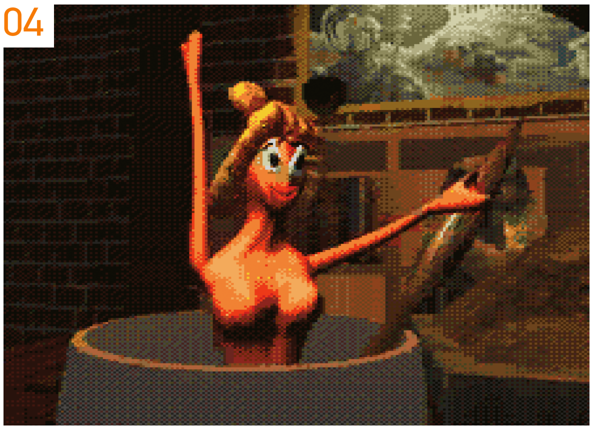
» Woody gets congratulated by Low Man, the only part of a magical totem that didn't manage to escape into a new world. He tasked Woody with retrieving the remaining totem parts and he's pleased with what has been achieved.

03



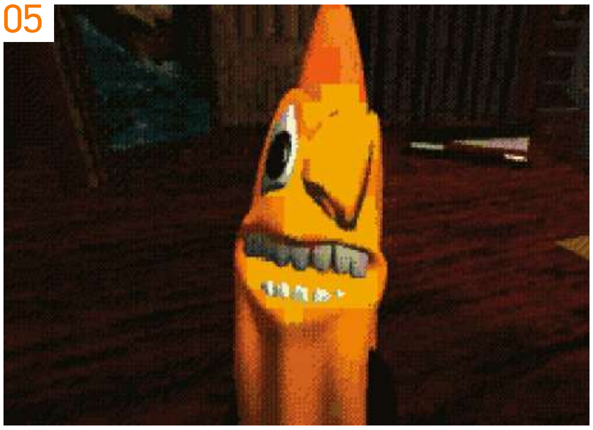
» Low Man feels a reward is in order for Woody's efforts and asks him if he wishes to become 'king of the world', 'super powerful' or a 'rock and roll star'. Woody appears to want none of these things. He craves something more…

04



» It appears that the only thing that will truly motivate our hero is something that puts lead in his pencil. After agreeing to Woody's wish Low Man creates a horrific-looking sentient paintbrush and endows her with comically large breasts. Woody approves.

05



» After Woody's eyes pop out of his head in a sequence taken straight out of a Tex Avery cartoon, he hugs his girl and winks lewdly at the camera. We can't see this crassness working today, but at least Woody's name now makes more sense.

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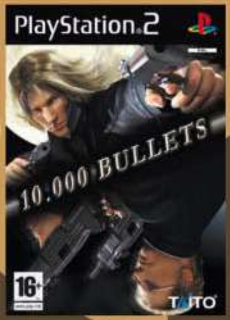
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